DISSENT

POLITICS AND IDEAS IN AMERICA

ON KNOWLEDGE AND POWER	C. WRIGHT MILLS
THE CHIMERA OF CONSERVATISM	EUGENE VICTOR WALTER
AMERICA: THE COUNTRY AND THE MYTH	IRVING HOWE

Asia: the Peasant's Way	ASOKA MEHTA
Thaw in the Cold War	LEWIS COSER
The Legend of Edmund Burke	BERTRAM SARASON
Matusow: Boomerang Boy	TRAVERS CLEMENT
British Labor's Self-Examination	WILLIAM NEWMAN

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF FREUDIAN "REVISIONISM"
HERBERT MARCUSE

SUMMER 1955 75c

DISSENT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The purpose of this magazine is suggested by its name: to dissent from the bleak atmosphere of conformism that pervades the political and intellectual life of the United States: to dissent from the support of the "status quo," now so noticeable on the part of many former radicals and socialists: to dissent from the terrible assumption that a new war is necessary or inevitable.

The accent of DISSENT will be radical. Its tradition will be the tradition of democratic socialism. We shall try to reassert the libertarian values of the socialist ideal, and at the same time, to discuss freely and honestly what in the socialist tradition remains alive and what needs to be discarded or modified. We are, it goes without saying, unalterably opposed to all forms of totalitarianism, both of the Fascist and the Stalinist varieties.

DISSENT is not and does not propose to become a political party or group. On the contrary, its existence is based on an awareness that in America today there is no significant socialist movement and that, in all likelihood, no such movement will appear in the immediate future.

DISSENT will not have any editorial position or statements. Each writer will speak for himself. Our magazine will be open to a wide range of opinion, though naturally our editorial emphasis will be such as to favor those contributions which help reestablish socialist thought and value. At the same time we shall welcome any expression of competent thought or scholarly contributions touching upon our area of interest, even if these dissent from DISSENT.

DISSENT, issued July 1, 1955, is published quarterly by Dissent Publishing Association, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. Subscriptions: $2.50 for one year, $4.00 for two years; $2.00 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $3.00 for one year, $5 for two years. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U. S. money orders or checks payable in U. S. currency. Single copy: $.75.

Copyright 1955 by Dissent Publishing Association. Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the Publishers. ● Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. ● Entered as second-class matter at the post office at New York, New York on April 1, 1954 under the authority of the act of March 3, 1879. ● Volume II, No. 3 (Whole Number 7).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT

VOLUME II
NUMBER 3

Summer 1955

EDITORIAL BOARD

Travers Clement
Lewis Coser
Emanuel Geltman
Irving Howe
Norman Mailer
Stanley Plastrik
Bernard Rosenberg
Meyer Schapiro

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Erich Fromm
Sid Lens
Frank Marquart
A. J. Muste
George Woodcock

A QUARTERLY OF SOCIALIST OPINION

CONTENTS

Page

JOURNAL OF THE QUARTER

THAW IN THE COLD WAR —*by Lewis Coser* 195

BRITISH LABOR'S DEFEAT —*by S. P.* 198

ARTICLES

ON KNOWLEDGE AND POWER —*by C. Wright Mills* 201

ASIA: THE PEASANT'S WAY —*by Asoka Mehta* 213

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF FREUDIAN "REVISIONISM" —*by Herbert Marcuse* 221

AMERICAN NOTEBOOK

1. AMERICA, THE COUNTRY AND THE MYTH—*by Irving Howe* .. 241

2. BIG BUSINESS ON THE DOLE —*by B. R.* 244

3. MATUSOW: BOOMERANG BOY —*by Travers Clement* 246

THE CHIMERA OF CONSERVATISM —*by Eugene Victor Walter* .. 250

THE LEGEND OF EDMUND BURKE —*by Bertram Sarason* 257

BRITISH LABOR'S SELF-EXAMINATION—*by William J. Newman* 264

COMMUNICATIONS

1. AN EXCHANGE ON THE ADA CONVENTION—*by David C. Williams; Irving Howe replies* .. 269

2. A SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION IN U.S. TODAY?—YES—*by Gordon Haskell; Lewis Coser replies* . 271

BOOKS

WITH A BANG AND A WHIMPER —*by Ben B. Seligman* 280

A GREAT SOCIOLOGIST—*by L. C.* .. 282

SOCRATIC ELENCHUS— *by Stanley Plastrik* 283

MISCELLANY

SIDNEY HOOK CHATS WITH KARL MARX—*by I. H.* 285

THE PRICE OF NON-CONFORMITY —*by William O. Reichart* .. 286

ON MCCARTHY AND THE SPECTRE—*by William Spinrad* . 288

LETTERS .....third cover

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our Second Anniversary Issue

To celebrate the completion of two years of DISSENT, we will publish a special, enlarged issue this coming fall. We are trying to make it the best yet, and here are some of the articles you will read in it:

G. L. ARNOLD, the English political writer, has sent us an extremely interesting study called *Collectivism Reconsidered,* in which he discusses possibilities for the growth of democracy in an increasingly collectivized society. C. WRIGHT MILLS will appear with a study of American intellectuals. BEN SELIGMAN is working on a lengthy critical analysis of Keynesian economics. From Detroit FRANK MARQUART will send an authoritative report on the recent negotiations between the UAW and the auto companies, in which he will also analyze the "Guaranteed Annual Wage." HAROLD ROSENBERG is working on an essay-review of Leslie Fiedler's book *An End to Innocence,* and IRVING HOWE will review Murray Kempton's *Part of Our Time.* Two articles on the problem of factory life are at hand, one by the French socialist writers ANDRIEUX & LIGNON, and the other called *The Right to Laziness* by PIERRE RABASSIERE.

We're Here to Stay—

At the same time DISSENT is pleased to announce that it can now accept two year subscriptions at the rate of $4. This will save you money, and save us bookkeeping troubles. It is a concrete way of helping the magazine: subscribe for two years!

DISSENT
509 5th Avenue
New York 17, N. Y.

Please enter my subscription for—

1 year ($2.00) ☐ 2 years ($4.00) ☐

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Journal of the Quarter

THAW IN THE COLD WAR

Two months ago the largest atomic bomb yet tested in the Nevada desert brought sudden sunrise to cities 300 miles away. Only two miles from the center of the explosion a small town had been built with no purpose other than to test the bomb's destructive effects. Its street sign, instead of reading Main Street, read *Doomsday Drive*.

Till very recently one might have taken this product of the macabre whimsicality of the military mind as an adequate symbol of the main drift in world affairs. With the increasing polarization of the world into two overwhelmingly powerful superblocs and with the development of means of destruction capable of annihilating a large part of the race, it seemed as if all mankind was engaged in a suicidal race along *Doomsday Drive*.

But now again, as so often in the past, the military mind seems to have lagged behind the realities of the hour. Just as the violet pillar of dust rose in the Nevada desert, one began to observe a number of indications that the frozen world of *Doomsday Drive* showed signs of breaking up, that a thaw had set in.

The second world war had hardly ended when the peoples of the world began to accept the inevitability of a third and more horrible war. Europe, once the center of western culture, had become a Balkanized peninsula along the Euro-Asian rimland, a semi-colony, a population to be fought over and administered; Asia had likewise become a political vacuum between the power centers of Washington and Moscow. Men and nations were choosing one or the other of the two sides in the two-power world that was the heritage of their war. It was a forced choice, an acceptance of raw alternatives. There seemed to be no hope, and there was none so long as men's minds were chained to the alternatives offered by Russian and American spokesmen.

Other wars had seemed punctuation points in a continuum of peace, now peace seemed identical with preparation for inevitable war. And as the conditions of living under a permanent war economy grew more normal, the possibilities of independent political action for nations as well as for classes and individuals were increasingly surrendered.

Confronted by the ideological and material power of America and Russia, the labor movement, as well as leading intellectual spokesmen all over the world, either capitulated to one of the two camps or advanced their own powerlessness as a reason for retreat from politics. As the polarization of the world proceeded and as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the spectre of total war fought to total annihilation seemed ever more real, the combined pressures of anxiety and fear resulted in widening patterns of conformity within all the nations of the world. Any non-conformist action on the domestic scene was immediately accused of endangering national security in the face of overwhelming threat. The populations remained passive and acquiescent, lacking awareness of alternatives, while the statesmen, either from design or stupidity, accelerated the drift toward world suicide.

THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE that the year 1955 may mark a turning point or at least a temporary halt in this deadly drift. The events of the last months, from Bandung to Vienna, from Belgrade to Geneva, all seem to point in one direction: the trend toward a total polarization of the nations is coming to an end and new semi-independent, semi-autonomous power centers are emerging. As the heavy mortgage of impending doom is slowly lifted, it becomes possible again to talk of alternatives in international relations as well as in domestic affairs.

In the last five years there has developed, as Walter Lippmann has cogently argued, a steady and deep undertow which has been dragging the non-atomic powers into some kind of middle position between the two superblocs, where they have some hope or chance of not becoming involved in atomic war.

The absence of any political force in America which would have exerted pressure on the administration to reverse its bellicose stance in foreign affairs allowed the State Department to maintain its inept and inflexible policies to the point where last year it seemed that only a miracle could prevent the world from being plunged into atomic war over Dienbienphu or the Formosa straits.

The impossibility of any dissenting political force in the totalitarian Soviet Union seemed last year to indicate that after the struggle between the opposing power cliques had been temporarily settled Russia was ready again to resume an expansionist drive which would inevitably result in world war.

The reversal of these trends in the last few months is thus to be accounted for, at least in large part, by developments in those areas of the world not totally committed to the guidance of either Washington or Moscow. The Bandung conference therefore seems of great symbolic—though of little immediate practical—import. The Asian and African powers gathered in Bandung were deeply divided along political and ideological lines; they ranged from powers tied to the Russian bloc to countries such as the Philippines which have never been known to depart from the line laid down by the Department of State. And yet they were able to express a yearning which in recent years has found little official expression: the yearning to live in a peaceful world, *the yearning to be left alone.*

The spokesmen for "crackpot realism" will say that in the modern world it is not possible to be neutral, that it all depends "which side you are neutral on"; and it is perfectly true that should atomic war break out most if not all the nations will be dragged into it. But the point is simply that the smaller nations want by all means to *prevent* atomic war with its attendant deadly choices. They know that whosoever might be the victor, they will be among the victims.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE SIMPLISTIC SCHEMES which in the postwar years replaced political thinking will now have to be discarded. It is no longer possible naively to align the world into countries which are "for us" and "against us"; children of darkness and children of light. It has become obvious in recent months that the smaller nations are desperately striving to assert their right to be neither "white" nor "black" but simply to remain grey.

When Tito resists the blandishments of the Russians again to align himself on the side of Moscow; when England, France and most other Western nations firmly decline the invitation to help in the "unleashing of Chiang Kai-shek"; when Japan artfully dodges Washington's appeals to accelerate its armaments and instead establishes diplomatic and trade relations with the Russian bloc; when Nehru and Burma's socialist premier politely refuse to abandon their role of go-between and mediator, they indicate that they are not willing to be dragged into "crusades." Despite conflicts among themselves, they are linked by a community of sentiment and outlook in at least one respect: they refuse to travel along *Doomsday Drive.*

All of these nations stand for some form of coexistence, though they interpret coexistence in the most varied ways. Yet all of them resist a coexistence that would mean the splitting up of the world into protected hunting grounds for the two powers; they all strive for a coexistence based on an unfreezing of present rigidities and a certain amount of "play" for the intermediate nations.

The overwhelming impact of this sentiment in the world has in recent months forced the policy makers in Washington and Moscow to reverse their lines (though other influences were undoubtedly also present). It is now recognized on both sides that given a relative equality in atomic power between the two blocs, the intermediary powers have again assumed a key role. Since they seem to hold the balance of power and thus have again acquired the ability to make independent moves, the wooing of these powers has assumed an unexpected importance for both Washington and Moscow. By a curious turn of the screw those nations which until recently seemed negligible quantities in the struggle for the world have again assumed strength simply because they are uncommitted. Thus it is precisely those who possess no atomic weapons, those who would be powerless should atomic war break out, who are now in a position of strength.

During the next few years we are likely to live in an uneasy political stalemate, which will not eventuate in permanent solutions but is yet likely to lighten the pressure to choose between the two camps. In the next few years traditional diplomacy with its give and take, its accommodations and mutual adjustments, is likely to replace the atmosphere of "crusading" compulsiveness. In such a climate new alternatives may again become possible, both internationally and domestically.

War or threat of war is the health of the totalitarian state; war or threat of war is the very lifeblood of the permanent war economy. If the threat of war recedes the political economies of Russia and the United States will be seriously affected—the thaw on the international arena is thus likely also to lead to some unfreezing on the domestic scene.

James Reston is possibly quite correct for the immediate future when he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

argues in *The New York Times* for May 29 that the peoples of the West will show a continued tendency toward political apathy, a tendency toward pragmatic rather than ideological solutions, a tendency to accept the welfare state and avoid "extremist" thinking. But what Reston is unable to see is that the public listlessness which he correctly observes is precisely a reflex of the realities of the age of the H-bomb. Should this atomic nightmare be lifted to some degree, one may expect people in both East and West to begin stretching themselves, yawn and then awaken to the realization that the creative energies of mankind might be utilized for purposes other than the delights of private contentment or the preparation of atomic suicide.

LEWIS COSER

BRITISH LABOR'S DEFEAT

The British elections have created only a faint stir. For once, the expected took place largely as expected. A million and a half voters who in 1945 had supported the Labor Party simply abstained from the ballot, thus allowing the solidly mobilized Conservatives to treble their margin in the House of Commons.

Within a decade since its exhilarating victory of 1945 the leading socialist party of the world has lost its political dynamism. Why this should be so has been discussed in articles that have appeared in DISSENT over the past two years; the note by William Newman in this issue, whether one agrees or disagrees (as I do) with its political emphasis, similarly points to some of the difficulties facing the British Labor Party. Here only a few words are necessary about the more immediate aspects of its defeat.

British Toryism clearly outmaneuvered Labor on all fronts. It skillfully picked both the time and the issues of the campaign. It chose a moment when the issues were blurred not only by a decided if temporary stabilization in the British economy itself, but also by an apparent world trend toward a stabilization of power relationships which passes for peaceful coexistence. What is more, Labor itself dulled the issues by its continued acceptance of what is tantamount to a bi-partisan foreign policy (a meeting "at the summit," manufacture of the H-Bomb as a deterrent to war, etc.) This may have been calculated to win the praise of American journalists as a token of "responsibility," but was hardly a means of staking out clear issues upon which to arouse the British voters.

Still, this lack of fighting campaign material cannot by itself account for Eden's victory. Another, perhaps more decisive element must be mentioned: the split within the Labor Party itself.

THE TOTAL EFFECT OF THE STRUGGLE among the three loose groups within the Labor Party was to weaken if not paralyze its campaign and to expose the confusion and uncertainty that is today characteristic of almost all its leaders, left, right or center. It is astonishing that, all things considered and not including abstentions, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

actual shift in votes amounted to a mere two percent—which would indicate that the traditional loyalty of the British workers and other Labor Party supporters, while not as intense as it was ten years ago, was still there. The right wing of the party (Gaitskill and his friends) campaigned against the Bevanites; the left or pseudo-left (Bevan and his supporters) against the right wing; while the center group (Attlee and the oldsters) campaigned not at all.

The right wing, consisting of younger technicians and "managerialists" who at many points overlap with the Young Tories, used the election as a means to step up their struggle to take over the party machine. Their noisy anti-Bevanism is a barrage behind which they prepare for something more consequential: to demolish (or retire) Attlee and the party center. The Bevanites, who in some ways came off worst in the party's general humiliation, campaigned in dogmatic, bull-in-the-china-shop style. Bevan flayed his opponents (in and out of the party) with more demagogy than intelligence. The Bevanite house organ, *Tribune,* stopped at no anti-American vulgarity and even built its campaign around the most futile of strategies: *Cry Havoc* ("Six H-Bombs will destroy England.") In 1951 the specific forms taken by Bevanite militancy (the stress on social welfare at home) could strike sparks; in 1955 this militancy (diluted by neutralism and an approach to foreign policy that frequently bordered on crypto-Stalinism) proved a wet squib.

The lesson? Aggressive militancy is no substitute for clarity of thought and program. Bevan simply failed to consider how deeply the mood and outlook of the English people had changed since 1945, nor why these changes had taken place. He campaigned in accordance with an image of himself, not in accordance with an analysis of England. And meanwhile the Conservatives, with a neat assist from the Eisenhower administration, took away the main demand of the Bevanites—a "meeting of the Big Four at the summit."

As for the social program of the Bevanites, decidedly underemphasized in this election, it could not now exert the impact it had in 1945, not only because the Conservatives have retained the essential features of Welfarism, but because they were substantially helped by the favorable economic situation of the last few years. The "prosperity" of England has made for the formation of a new labor aristocracy, and has encouraged middle-class sentiments among the sons and daughters of old-line trade unionists. As a result, much of the urgency with which social reforms were formerly advanced was no longer felt, either by the party speakers or by the party supporters.

BEVAN'S CRITICISM THAT LACK of militancy cost the British Labor Party the election of 1951 had considerable cogency, but it will not do this time. Nonetheless, the weaknesses of the center group within the party, at which he kept hammering, is incontestable. The old Attlee leadership, using the bleached remnants of Fabian terminology, has managed to retain formal control of the party, but everyone knows that this is merely a temporary measure aimed at preventing an immediate party split. By comparison to both the Bevan and Gaitskill groups, the Attlee center would now seem to merit a bit more sympathy than before; at least it retains something of the democratic and moral tone of tra-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ditional socialist belief. But as for finding a new road for the party, it has nothing more to offer than the two groups—perhaps even less, since Gaitskill has his managerial perspective and Bevan his militant rhetoric, while Attlee has only his unchallenged personal decency.

Nor does the suggestion of the aging centrists that the party revive itself by "putting youth into the leadership" help out. Which youth? There are all kinds of youth in the Labor Party.

The Tories have a practical scheme which, for the moment, "works." The Labor Party, its Fabian period at an end, has failed to develop a new outlook. The Bevanite rebellion, at first so dynamic and hopeful, has bogged down in feuds, spite and phrases. If the divisions within the party ruled out campaign effectiveness, the nature of these divisions rules out, for the present, the hope for political rearming.

Yet we must remember that twelve million people voted for the party that is identified with democratic socialism. This is a fact of vast importance. Facing a world far more complicated and difficult than it or anyone else had ever imagined, the Labor Party has now the task of thinking out the meaning of socialist programs and values. That this is not easy we know only too well. But in England at least the need is real: a great movement of socialist inclination remains as one of the two political forces in the country, and this very fact gives the problem of socialist revaluation a reality and urgency it cannot quite have in America. S. P.

Court Affirms Right to Travel

The decision of the federal Court of Appeals in the case of Max Shachtman, chairman of the Independent Socialist League, against the Passport Division of the State Department has come too late for extensive comment in this issue of DISSENT. This important decision by the federal court proclaiming the right of all Americans to travel abroad freely is another welcome blow, among several recently struck by the traditionally conservative judiciary, against the increasingly arbitrary and arrogant actions of various government bodies. The Workers Defense League and lawyer Joseph L. Rauh brought the case to court.

Victory, of course, is far from assured and Shachtman still has a long way to go before obtaining his passport. But through this case, which was largely ignored by the press before the decision, a road has at least been opened and, perhaps more important than the passport issue itself, a challenge to the infamous "subversive organizations" list has been launched.

(*Labor Action* reports that the Attorney General has now offered the ISL a hearing, the first of its kind, on its listing.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON KNOWLEDGE AND POWER*

C. Wright Mills

I

During the last few years I have often thought that American intellectuals are now rather deeply involved in what Freud once called "the miscarriage of American civilization." I do not know exactly what he meant by the phrase, although I suppose he intended to contrast the eighteenth-century ideals with which this nation was so hopefully proclaimed with their sorry condition in twentieth-century America.

Among these values none has been held higher than the grand role of reason in civilization and in the lives of its civilized members. And none has been more sullied and distorted by men of power in the mindless years we have been enduring. Given the caliber of the American elite, and the immorality of accomplishment in terms of which they are selected, perhaps we should have expected this. But political intellectuals too have been giving up the old ideal of the public relevance of knowledge. Among them a conservative mood—a mood that is quite appropriate for men living in a political vacuum—has come to prevail.

Perhaps nothing is of more immediate importance, both as cause and as effect of this mood, than the rhetorical ascendancy and the intellectual collapse of liberalism: As a proclamation of *ideals,* classic liberalism, like classic socialism, remains part of the secular tradition of the West. As a *theory* of society, liberalism has become irrelevant, and, in its optative way, misleading, for no revision of liberalism as a theory of the mechanics of modern social change has overcome the trade mark of the nineteenth century that is stamped upon its basic assumptions. As a political *rhetoric,* liberalism's key terms have become the common denominators of the political vocabulary, and hence have been stretched beyond any usefulness as a way of defining issues and stating positions.**

As the administrative liberalism of the Thirties has been swallowed

* A modified version of this essay was presented to a joint meeting of the William A. White and the Harry S. Sullivan Societies in New York City, February 1955.
** Cf. Mills, "Liberal Values in the Modern World," *Anvil and Student Partisan,* Winter 1952.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up by economic boom and military fright, the noisier political initiative has been seized by a small group of petty conservatives, which on the middle levels of power, has managed to set the tone of public life. Exploiting the American fright of the new international situation for their own purposes, these political primitives have attacked not only the ideas of the New and Fair Deals; they have attacked the history of those administrations, and the biographies of those who took part in them. And they have done so in a manner that reveals clearly the basis upon which their attractive power rests: they have attacked the symbols of status and the figures of established prestige. By their attack upon men and institutions of established status, the noisy right has appealed not at all to the economically discontented, but to the status frustrated.* Their push has come from the *nouveau riche,* of small city as well as larger region, and, above all, from the fact of the rankling status resentment felt by these newly prosperous classes who, having achieved considerable wealth during and after World War II, have not received the prestige nor gained the power that they have felt to be their due.

They have brought into dramatic focus the higher immorality as well as the mindlessness of the upper circles in America. On the one hand, we have seen a decayed and frightened liberalism, and on the other hand, the insecure and ruthless fury of political gangsters. A Secretary of the Army, also a man of older family wealth, is told off by upstarts, and in public brawl disgraced by unestablished nihilists. They have brought into focus a new conception of national loyalty, which we came to understand as loyalty to individual gangs who placed themselves above the established legitimations of the state, and invited officers of the U. S. Army to do likewise. They have made plain the central place now achieved in the governmental process by secret police and secret "investigations," to the point where we must now speak of a shadow cabinet based in considerable part upon new ways of power which include the wire tap, the private eye, the widespread use and threat of blackmail. And they have dramatized one political result of the hollowing out and the banalizing of sensibility among a population which for a generation now has been steadily and increasingly subjected to the shrill trivialization of the mass means of entertainment and distraction.

As liberalism sat in these "hearings," liberals became aware, from time to time, of how close they were to the edge of the mindless abyss. The status edifice of bourgeois society was under attack, but since in America there is nothing from the past above that established edifice,

* Although this interpretation is now widely published, Paul Sweezy's and Leo Huberman's original article remains the most forthright account of it: "The Roots and Prospects of McCarthyism," *Monthly Review,* January 1954.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and since those of once liberal and left persuasion see nothing in the future below it, they have become terribly frightened by the viciousness of the attack, and their political lives have been narrowed to the sharp edge of defensive anxiety.

Post-war liberalism has been organizationally impoverished: the pre-war years of liberalism-in-power devitalized independent liberal groups, drying up their grass roots, making older leaders dependent upon the federal center and not training new leaders round the country. The New Deal left no liberal organization to carry on any liberal program; rather than a new party, its instrument was a loose coalition inside an old one, which quickly fell apart so far as liberal ideas are concerned. Moreover, in using up, in one way or another, the heritage of liberal ideas, banalizing them as it put them into law, the New Deal turned liberalism into a set of administrative routines to defend rather than a program to fight for.

In their moral fright, post-war liberals have not defended any left-wing or even any militantly liberal position: their defensive posture has, first of all, concerned the civil liberties.

Many of the political intelligentsia have been so busy celebrating formal civil liberties in America, by contrast with their absence from Soviet Communism, that they have often failed to defend them. But more importantly, most have been so busy defending civil liberties that they have had neither the time nor the inclination to *use* them. "In the old days," Archibald MacLeish has remarked, freedom "was something you used . . . [it] has now become something you save—something you put away and protect like your other possessions—like a deed or a bond in a bank."*

It is much safer to celebrate civil liberties than to defend them, and it is much safer to defend them as a formal right than to use them in a politically effective way: Even those who would most willingly subvert these liberties, usually do so in their very name. It is easier still to defend someone else's right to have used them years ago than to have something yourself to say *now* and to say it now forcibly. The defense of civil liberties—even of their practice a decade ago—has become the major concern of many liberal and once leftward scholars. All of which is a safe way of diverting intellectual effort from the sphere of political reflection and demand.

The defensive posture, secondly, has concerned American Values in general, which, quite rightly it has been feared, the petty right seeks to destroy. Quite unwittingly, I am sure, the U. S. intelligentsia has found itself in the middle of the very nervous center of elite and plebeian anxieties about the position of America in the world today.

---

* *Atlantic Monthly,* August 1949.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What is at the root of these anxieties is not simply international tension and the terrible, helpless feeling of many that another war is surely in the works. There is also involved in them a specific worry with which many serious-minded Americans are seriously concerned.

The United States is now engaged with other nations, particularly Russia, in a full-scale competition for cultural prestige based on nationality. In this competition, what is at issue is American music and American literature and American art, and, in the somewhat higher meaning than is usually given to that term, The American Way of Life. For what America has got abroad is power; what it has *not* got at home or abroad is cultural prestige. This simple fact has involved those of the new gentility in the curious American celebration, into which much scholarly and intellectual energy now goes. The celebration rests upon the felt need to defend themselves in nationalist terms against the petty right; and it rests upon the need, shared by many spokesmen and statesmen as urgent, to create and to uphold the cultural prestige of America abroad.*

THE NOISY CONSERVATIVES, OF COURSE, have no more won political power than administrative liberals have retained it. While those two camps have been engaged in wordy battle, and while the intellectuals have been embraced by the new conservative gentility, the silent conservatives have assumed political power. Accordingly, in their imbroglio with the noisy right, liberal and once-left forces have, in effect, defended these established conservatives, if only because they have lost any initiative of attack, in fact, lost even any point of effective criticism. The silent conservatives of corporation, army and state have benefited politically and economically and militarily by the antics of the petty right, who have become, often unwittingly, their political shocktroops. And they have ridden into power on all those structural trends set into motion and accelerated by the organization of the nation for seemingly permanent war.

So, in this context of material prosperity, with the noisy little men of the petty right successfully determining the tone and level of public sensibility; the silent conservatives achieving established power in a mindless victory; with the liberal rhetoric made official, then banalized by widespread and perhaps illicit use; with liberal hope carefully

* Examples of The American Celebration are embarrassingly available. Unfortunately no one of them is really worth examining in detail: In order that the sort of thing I have in mind may be clear, by all means see Jacques Barzun, *God's Country and Mine* (Boston: Little Brown, 1954). Mr. Barzun believes that "the way to see America is from a lower berth about two in the morning," and so far as I can tell from his book, he really means it. For a less flamboyant example, done in at least dim daylight, see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); and for a scatter of celebrants, see *America and The Intellectuals* (New York: PR series, Number Four, 1953).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

adjusted to mere rhetoric by thirty years of rhetorical victory; with radicalism deflated and radical hope stoned to death by thirty years of defeat—the political intellectuals have been embraced by the conservative mood. Among them there is no demand and no dissent, and no opposition to the monstrous decisions that are being made without deep or widespread debate, in fact with no debate at all. There is no opposition to the undemocratically impudent manner in which policies of high military and civilian authority are simply turned out as facts accomplished. There is no opposition to public mindlessness in all its forms nor to all those forces and men that would further it. But above all—among the men of knowledge, there is little or no opposition to the divorce of knowledge from power, of sensibilities from men of power, no opposition to the divorce of mind from reality.

II

Once upon a time, at the beginning of the United States, men of affairs were also men of culture: to a considerable extent the elite of power and the elite of culture coincided, and where they did not coincide as persons they often overlapped as circles. Within the compass of a knowledgeable and effective public, knowledge and power were in effective touch; and, more than that, this classic public also decided much that was decided.

"Nothing is more revealing," James Reston has written, "than to read the debate in the House of Representatives in the Eighteen Thirties on Greece's fight with Turkey for independence and the Greek-Turkish debate in the Congress in 1947. The first is dignified and eloquent, the argument marching from principle through illustration to conclusion; the second is a dreary garble of debating points, full of irrelevancies and bad history."* George Washington in 1783 read Voltaine's "Letters" and Locke's "On Human Understanding"; Eisenhower, two hundred years later, reads cowboy tales and detective stories.** For such men as now typically arrive in the higher political, economic and military circles, the briefing and the memorandum seem to have pretty well replaced not only the serious book, but the newspaper as well. This is, perhaps, as it must be, given the immorality of accomplishment, but what is somewhat disconcerting about it is that these men are below the level on which they might feel a little bit ashamed of the uncultivated level of their relaxation and of their mental fare, and that no intellectual public, by its reactions, tries to educate them to such uneasiness.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the American elite have become an entirely different breed of men from those who could on any reasonable grounds be considered a cultural elite, or even for that

* *The New York Times,* January 31, 1954, editorial page.
** *The New York Times Book Review,* August 23, 1953.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matter, cultivated men of sensibility. Knowledge and power are not truly united inside the ruling circles; and when men of knowledge do come to a point of contact with the circles of powerful men, they come not as peers but as hired men. The elite of power, wealth and celebrity are not of the elite of culture, knowledge and sensibility. Moreover, they are not in contact with it, although the banalized and ostentatious fringes of the two worlds do overlap in the world of the celebrity.

Most men are encouraged to assume that, in general, the most powerful and the wealthiest are also the most knowledgeable or, as they might say, the smartest. Such ideas are propped up by many little slogans about those who "teach because they can't *do*," and about "if you're so smart, why aren't you rich?" But all that such wisecracks mean is that those who use them assume that power and wealth are sovereign values for all men and especially for men "who are smart." They assume also that knowledge always pays off in such ways, or surely ought to, and that the test of genuine knowledge is just such pay-offs. The powerful and the wealthy *must* be the men of most knowledge; otherwise how could they be where they are? But to say that those who succeed to power must be "smart," is to say that power *is* knowledge. To say that those who succeed to wealth must be smart, is to say that wealth *is* knowledge.

These assumptions do reveal something that is true: that ordinary men, even today, are prone to explain and to justify power and wealth in terms of knowledge or ability. Such assumptions also reveal something of what has happened to the kind of experience that knowledge has come to be. Knowledge is no longer widely felt as an ideal; it is seen as an instrument. And in a society of power and wealth, knowledge is valued as an instrument of power and wealth, and also, of course, as an ornament in conversation, a tid-bit in a quiz program.

What knowledge does to a man (in clarifying what he is, and setting it free)—that is the personal ideal of knowledge. What knowledge does to a civilization (in revealing its human meaning, and setting it free)—that is the social ideal of knowledge. But today, the personal *and* the social ideals of knowledge have coincided in what knowledge does *for* the smart guy: it gets him ahead; and for the wise nation: it lends cultural prestige, haloing power with authority.

Knowledge seldom lends power to the man of knowledge. But the supposed, and secret, knowledge of some men-on-the-powerful-make, and their very free use thereof, has consequence for other men who have not the power of defense. Knowledge, of course, is neither good nor bad, nor is its use good or bad. "Bad men increase in knowledge as fast as good men," John Adams wrote, "and science, arts, taste, sense and letters, are employed for the purpose of injustice as well as for virtue." That was in 1790; today we have good reason to know that it is so.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The problem of knowledge and power is, and always has been, the problem of the relations of men of knowledge with men of power. Suppose we were to select the one hundred most powerful men, from all fields of power, in America today and line them up. And then, suppose we selected the one hundred most knowledgeable men, from all fields of social knowledge, and lined them up. How many men would be in *both* our line-ups? Of course our selection would depend upon what we mean by power and what we mean by knowledge—especially what we mean by knowledge. But, if we mean what the words seem to mean, surely we would find few if any men in America today who were in both groups, and surely we could find many more at the time this nation was founded than we could find today. For, in the eighteenth century, even in this colonial outpost, men of power pursued learning, and men of learning were often in positions of power. In these respects we have, I believe, suffered grievous decline.*

There is little union in the same persons of knowledge and power; but persons of power do surround themselves with men of some knowledge, or at least with men who are experienced in shrewd dealings. The man of knowledge has not become a philosopher king; but he has often become a consultant, and moreover a consultant to a man who is neither king-like nor philosophical. It is not natural in the course of their careers for men of knowledge to meet with those of power. The links between university and government are weak, and when they do occur, the man of knowledge appears as an "expert" which usually means as a hired technician. Like most others in this society, the man of knowledge is himself dependent for his livelihood upon the job, which nowadays is a prime sanction of thought control. Where getting ahead requires the good opinions of more powerful others, their judgments become prime objects of concern. Accordingly, in so far as intellectuals serve power directly—in a job hierarchy—they often do so unfreely.

The characteristic member of the higher circles today is an intellectual mediocrity, sometimes a conscientious one, but still a mediocrity. His intelligence is revealed only by his occasional realization that he is not up to the decisions he sometimes feels called upon to confront. But usually he keeps such feelings private, his public utterances being pious and sentimental, grim and brave, cheerful and empty in their

* In *Perspectives, USA,* No. 3, Mr. Lionel Trilling has written optimistically of "new intellectual classes," and has even referred to the Luce publications as samples of high "intellectual talent." What lends his view its optimistic tone, I believe, is less the rise of any new intellectual classes than (1) old intellectual groups becoming a little prosperous, even successful, in a minor way, on American terms, and, (2) of course, the confusion of knowledge as a goal with knowledge as a mere technique and instrument. For an informed account of new cultural strata by a brilliantly self-conscious insider, see Louis Kronenberger, *Company Manners* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1954).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

universal generality. He is open only to abbreviated and vulgarized, pre-digested and slanted ideas. He is a commander of the age of the memo and the briefing. He is briefed, but not for longer than one page; he talks on the phone, rather than writes letters or holds conversations.

By the mindlessness and mediocrity of men of affairs, I do not, of course, mean that these men are not sometimes intelligent men, although that is by no means automatically the case. It is not, however, primarily a matter of the distribution of "intelligence"—as if intelligence were a homogeneous something of which there may be more or less. It is rather a matter of the quality of mind, a quality which requires the evaluation of substantive rationality as the key value in a man's life and character and conduct. That evaluation is what is lacking from the American power elite. In its place there is "weight" and "judgment" which count for much more in their celebrated success than any sublety of mind or force of intellect.

All around, just below the weighty man of affairs, are his technical lieutenants of power who have been assigned the role of knowledge and even of speech: his public relations man, his ghost, his administrative assistants, his secretaries. And do not forget The Committee. With the increased means of decision, there is a crisis of understanding among the political directorate of the United States, and accordingly, there is often a commanding indecision.

THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AS AN EXPERIENCE and as a criterion among the elite ties in with the malign ascendancy of the expert, not only as fact but as a defense against public discourse and debate. When questioned recently about a criticism of defense policies made by the leader of the opposition party, the Secretary of Defense replied, "Do you think he is an expert in the matter?" When pressed further by reporters he asserted that the "military chiefs think it is sound, and I think it is sound," and later, when asked about specific cases, added: "In some cases, all you can do is ask the Lord."* With such a large role so arrogantly given to God, to experts, and to Mr. Wilson, what room is there for political leadership? Much less for public debate of what is after all every bit as much a political and a moral as a military issue?

Beyond the lack of intellectual cultivation by political personnel and advisory circles, the absence of publicly relevant minds has come to mean that powerful decisions and important policies are not made in such a way as to be justified and attacked, in short, debated in any intellectual form. Moreover, the attempt to so justify them is often not even made. Public relations displace reasoned argument; manipulation

* Charles E. Wilson. Cf. *The New York Times,* March 10, 1954, p. 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and undebated decisions of power replace democratic authority. More and more, as administration has replaced politics, decisions of importance do not carry even the panoply of reasonable discussion in public, but are made by God, by experts, and by men like Mr. Wilson.

And more and more the area of the official secret expands, as well as the area of the secret listening in on those who might divulge in public what the public, not being composed of experts with Q clearance, is not to know. The entire series of decisions concerning the production and the use of atomic weaponry has been made without any genuine public debate, and the facts needed to engage in that debate intelligently have been officially hidden, distorted, and lied about. As the decisions become more fateful, not only for Americans but literally for mankind, the sources of information are closed up, and the relevant facts needed for decision, and even of the decisions made, are, as politically convenient "official secrets," withheld from the heavily laden channels of information.

In the meantime, in those channels, political rhetoric continues to slide lower and lower down the scale of cultivation and sensibility. The height of such mindless communications to masses, or what are thought to be masses, is the commercial propaganda for toothpaste and soap and cigarettes and automobiles. It is to such things, or rather to Their Names, that this society sings its loudest praises most frequently. What is important about this is that by implication and omission, by emphasis and sometimes by flat statement, this astounding volume of propaganda for commodities is often untruthful and misleading; and is addressed more often to the belly or to the groin than to the head or to the heart. And the point to be made about this is that public communications from those who make powerful decisions or who would have us vote them into such decision-making places, competes with it, and more and more takes on those qualities of mindlessness and myth which commercial propaganda or advertising have come to exemplify.

In America today, men of affairs are not so much dogmatic as they are mindless. For dogma has usually meant some more or less elaborated justification of ideas and values, and thus has had some features (however inflexible and closed) of mind, of intellect, of reason. Nowadays what we are up against is precisely the absence of mind of any sort as a public force; what we are up against is a lack of interest in and a fear of knowledge that might have liberating public relevance. And what this makes possible is the prevalence of the kindergarten chatter, as well as decisions having no rational justifications which the intellect could confront and engage in debate.

It is not the barbarous irrationality of uncouth, dour Senators that is the American danger; it is the respected judgments of Secretaries of State, the earnest platitudes of Presidents, the fearful self-righteousness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of sincere young American politicians from sunny California, that is the main danger. For these men have replaced mind by the platitude, and the dogmas by which they are legitimated are so widely accepted that no counter-balance of mind prevails against them. Such men as these are crackpot realists, who, in the name of realism have constructed a paranoid reality all their own and in the name of practicality have projected a utopian image of capitalism. They have replaced the responsible interpretation of events by the disguise of meaning in a maze of public relations, respect for public debate by unshrewd notions of psychological warfare, intellectual ability by the agility of the sound and mediocre judgment, and the capacity to elaborate alternatives and to gauge their consequences by the executive stance.

III

In our time, all forms of public mindlessness must expropriate the individual mind, and we now know that this is an entirely possible procedure.* We also know that ideas, beliefs, images—symbols in short—stand between men and the wider realities of their time, and that accordingly those who professionally create, destroy, elaborate these symbols are very much involved in all literate men's very images of reality. For now, of course, the live experience of men falls far short of the objects of their belief and action, and the maintenance of adequate definitions of reality is by no means an automatic process, if indeed it ever was. Today that maintenance requires intellectuals of quite some skill and persistence, for much reality is now officially defined by those who hold power.

As a type of social man, the intellectual does not have any one political direction, but the work of any man of knowledge, if he is the genuine article, does have a distinct kind of political relevance: his politics, in the first instance, are the politics of truth, for his job is the maintenance of an adequate definition of reality. In so far as he is politically adroit, the main tenet of his politics is to find out as much of the truth as he can, and to tell it to the right people, at the right time, and in the right way. Or, stated negatively: to deny publicly what he knows to be false, whenever it appears in the assertions of no matter whom; and whether it be a direct lie or a lie by omission, whether it be by virtue of official secret or an honest error. The intellectual ought to be the moral conscience of his society, at least with reference to the value of truth, for in the defining instance, that *is* his politics. And he ought also to be a man absorbed in the attempt to know what is real and what is unreal.

Power and authority involve the actual making of *decisions*. They

* See Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Knopf, 1953), which is surely one of the great documents of our time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also involve the *legitimation* of the power and of the decisions by means of doctrine, and they usually involve the pomp and the halo, the *representations* of the powerful.* It is in connection with the legitimations and the representations of power and decision that the intellectual —as well as the artist—becomes politically relevant.

Intellectual work is related to power in numerous ways, among them these: with ideas one can uphold or justify power, attempting to transform it into legitimate authority; with ideas one can also debunk authority, attempting to reduce it to mere power, to discredit it as arbitrary or as unjust. With ideas one can conceal or expose the holders of power. And with ideas of more hypnotic though frivolous shape, one can divert attention from problems of power and authority and social reality in general.

So the Romantic poets symbolize the French Revolution to an English public and elaborate one strain of its doctrinal legitimation; so Virgil as a member of the Roman ruling class writes his *Georgics;* so John Reed reports to America the early phase of Bolshevism; so Rousseau legitimates the French Revolution, Milton the regime of Cromwell, Marx—in vulgarized form—the Russian revolution.**

And so, in an intellectually petty way, do the U. S. intellectuals now embraced by the conservative mood—whether they know it or not—serve to legitimate the mindless image of the American ascendancy abroad, and the victory of the silent conservatives at home. And more important than that: by the work they do not do they uphold the official definitions of reality, and, by the work they do, even elaborate it.

Whatever else the intellectual may be, surely he is among those who ask serious questions, and, if he is a political intellectual, he asks his questions of those with power. If you ask to what the intellectual belongs, you must answer that he belongs first of all to that minority which has carried on the big discourse of the rational mind, the big discourse that has been going on—or off and on—since western society began some two thousand years ago in the small communities of Athens and Jerusalem.*** This big discourse is not a vague thing to which to belong—even if as lesser participants—and it is the beginning of any sense of belonging that is worthwhile, and it is the key to the only kind of belonging that free men in our time might have. But if we would belong to it, we ought to try to live up to what it demands of us. What it demands of us, first of all, is that we maintain our sense of it. And, just now, at this point in human history, that is quite difficult.

---

* Cf. Gerth and Mills, *Character and Social Structure* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953), pp. 413 ff. for a further discussion of these three aspects of authority.
** Cf. Gerth and Mills, *op. cit.*
*** Cf. Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Measure of Man* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IV

THE DEMOCRATIC MAN ASSUMES the existence of a public, and in his rhetoric asserts that this public is the very seat of sovereignty. We object to Mr. Wilson, with his God and his Experts, because in his assertion he explicitly denies two things needed in a democracy: articulate and knowledgeable publics, and political leaders who if not men of reason are at least reasonably responsible to such knowledgeable publics as exist. Only where publics and leaders are responsive and responsible, are human affairs in democratic order, and only when knowledge has public relevance is this order possible. Only when mind has an autonomous basis, independent of power, but powerfully related to it, can it exert its force in the shaping of human affairs. Such a position is democratically possible only when there exists a free and knowledgeable public, to which men of knowledge may address themselves, and to which men of power are truly responsible. Such a public and such men—either of power or of knowledge, do not now prevail, and accordingly, knowledge does not now have democratic relevance in America.

New Contributors to this issue:—HERBERT MARCUSE is internationally known as a writer on political philosophy and as the author of a study of Hegel and Marx *Reason and Revolution* . . . E. V. WALTER has written on conservatism for *Partisan Review* and the scholarly journals . . . BERTRAM SARASON is presently at work on a book about Edmund Burke . . . WILLIAM NEWMAN has written about British politics and culture for the London *Twentieth Century*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The publication in our last issue of "Can Asia Industrialize Democratically?", reprinted with some small statistical deletions from Asoka Mehta's pamphlet, SOCIALISM AND PEASANTRY, stirred broad enthusiasm and interest, notably among students of Asia. Below we present another section of Mehta's pamphlet. As noted in our last issue, the style and language of the original have not been tampered with. We have received many requests for reprint copies of the two articles and we regret that we cannot yet supply these.—The Editors.

ASIA: THE PEASANT'S WAY

Asoka Mehta

When the relationship of socialism and peasantry is explored, it is necessary to understand the peasant's conception of development. It is, however, not easy to trace it. The peasant is not a very articulate being. He has not gone in very much for blueprints and master plans. His philosophy, because of his "soil wisdom," is often a curious mixture of a narrow practicality and a diffused mysticism. The social ideology of a peasant is not something that can be read on the run. Our effort to sketch the peasant's alternative is therefore tentative.

The peasant has a different sense of "income," and a different conception of "development." Income is not necessarily reducible to financial calculations, as we have been doing so far. For the peasant, income depends on, in a way consists of, the "welfare" patterns which the societies, or the individuals composing them, have chosen in accordance with their environment and objectives, their inherited traditions and disposition. His roots, his milieu, are as significant to him as economic betterment—in fact they are all woven into a common fabric of his hopes. The small family holding is not a mere means of living, not even social security, but a way of life.

The peasant needs land. In Asia, where land hunger is so deep and so ancient, no social order that does not distribute land equitably can survive. Of course, if others fail, the Communists will do it. "Communism first encourages the peasants to help themselves to land so that it might have its hands free to grasp political power, and then uses the political power to deprive the peasants of land"—this indict-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment of Mitrany's is true. But when the sophisticated man has gone with the Communists, despite clear warnings, the peasant cannot be expected, on his own, to assimilate the lessons of contemporary history.

The peasant wants land. Before the revolution, in Russia, Stolypin had tried to set up substantial farmers, with "sound" holdings. Lenin had denounced it as "the Prussian way," designed to strengthen the more efficient landowners and the kulaks; he had favored what he called "the American way," where traditional privileges would be removed and everyone would have equal opportunity, but where, in due course some were bound to rise with concentration of ownership, and the rest to sink. "Lenin did not believe that equality of opportunity to all peasants would lead to socialism, but that it would clear away obstacles to class differentiation and class struggle in the countryside."* The peasant would reject both ways as alien to his ambition. He favors diversified farming in family economics, woven into the wider texture of village life. Every peasant holding produces partly for the needs of the peasant family and partly for the market. The part produced for the needs of the family and which never reaches the market should remain the business of the peasant family also in the future. As to the other part, production for the market, the trend of evolution leads towards cooperative production of the village as a whole. Where there is a lack of land new possibilities of earning a livelihood must be created within the village, ranging from home industries to village factories. But the peasant's connection with the land must not be severed, he must not be driven from the soil.

Governments have either ignored the peasantry or sought to deal with the *individual* peasant directly. The peasant disapproves of both the attitudes. A small farmer cannot survive without support from the community and the state. In a state of the peasants' creation, the government would be solicitous about the needs of peasants. But the assistance would not be rendered individually or directly, but through the village. The moral unity of the village is basically different from that of a factory. That organic unity has to be accepted and respected.

IN THE PAST THE NEEDS OF THE PEASANT have received no consideration. While railways and highways expand, the simplest approach-roads to villages remain unattended. The peasant has naturally a different set of priorities. He needs roads, he needs credit, he wants responses to his felt needs. Development for him is not a set of decisions by a cadre of planners, but the piecemeal adaptation of individuals to goals which emerge in the process of work.

The peasant is not interested in changes that reduce man-hours

* Hugh Seton-Watson in *The Decline of Imperial Russia.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and displace labor. He wants changes that increase the yield per acre; more from land, not from fewer men. It is not that small holdings means no use of machines. The village cooperative, if fostered, would find room for small and simple machines, not so much for production as for *processing* the produce. Japanese farmers employ mechanical equipment adjustable to the size of the farm, but it is employed to process agricultural produce and not directly in raising crops. . . . The peasant would welcome the use of advanced machines for reclamation of submarginal lands.

The peasant is not opposed to industrial development, but he is against big trusts, against industries propped up with high prices and tariffs. His pattern of industrialization is based on three criteria: (1) manufacture of goods needed for daily use, in consumption and production, by the peasant; (2) use of local materials, and (3) provision of maximum employment part-time or full-time to the village people. The pattern, therefore, is of small units scattered widely, dispersal as against concentration.

The peasant's devotion to his family is another reason for his dislike of big industry. "Modern" industry and the traditional family are mutually subversive. Capitalist technology of ever bigger units threatens the twin roots of the peasant: his land and his family. The peasant is politically a radical. He favors universal franchise and representative government, but cares even more for local initiative and devolution of power from the village upwards; cooperative and administrative decentralization are the natural expressions of the economic and political philosophy of a peasant. He is suspicious of town and city. He fears their encroachment and exploitation. He would like to deal with the town on equal terms, to discover some way of collective bargaining for the peasants.

The small holding, according to Stalin, "stands at the crossroads of capitalism and socialism"; that means that it could either develop into capitalist concentration and differentiation or move towards the collective. But the peasant yearns to make the crossroads the pathway to his destiny. The peasant with his passionate attachment to land, his natural joy in labor, wants just that dose of capital that he can absorb. Secondly, he *claims* capital, he does not want to *yield* surplus value. If the village is recognized in all matters of administration and economy as a unit, its organic filaments would become strong again, and it would produce all the elements of organization that are needed for raising an old, stagnant economy to a new vibrant level.

The peasant's alternative, embodying the felt needs and questing hopes of the man behind the hoe, has a great relevance in the framework of democracy. If the peasant has a vote, notwithstanding his lack of organization and of ideological articulation, his wishes will be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt. In those countries of Asia where democracy is striking roots social change must be informed with the peasant's needs and hopes.

The following table shows the "weight" of the peasant in Asian economy, and therefore in any democratic polity:

Country	*Percentage of Population Engaged in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing*	*Percentage Engaged in Trade, Industry and Mining*
India	67	17
Burma	70	20
Ceylon	65	23
Indonesia	70	6
Japan	44	30
China	70-75	10-15

The peasant's basic demand is for land. . . . However, the problem is not disposed of with land reforms. To understand a part of the complexities the following table is useful:

Country	*Proportion of Owners & Tenants* % *Owners*	% *Tenants*	*Landless Laborers as Percentage of Total Agricultural Population*
India	45	55	55
Burma	59	41	40
Ceylon	75	25	44
Indonesia	90	10	30

The redistribution of lands should generally benefit the tenants, and help to increase the holdings of small owners, including the tenants-made-owners, to the level of a basic holding, e.g., 2.5 acres of rice lands in Japan. Such a policy will leave the landless laborers almost untouched. The problem of his absorption remains.

Even the redistributed lands, with millions of small holdings, would lead to stagnation and bankruptcy unless their functions are increasingly cooperativized, and the lands fertilized with state aid. This cannot be done with capitalism; if the peasant needs assistance, he must work for the nationalization of the developed sector of the economy—like big banks, insurance firms, foreign trade and large-scale industries. . . .

Redistribution of lands is essential and imperative, but unless it is accompanied by the growth of cooperatives and state aid to villages the reform will fail. Such assistance demands a *simultaneous* move towards nationalization of the *developed* sector of economy.

Distribution of lands is important, but, by itself, it is not a generating factor in economic development. After World War I, 25,000,000 acres of land were distributed in the countries of Eastern Europe (as against 30,000,000 acres in the same group of countries after World War II). This massive distribution did not lead to significant development because the vital link between agrarian radicalism and proletarian socialism was not forged.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the other hand, a determined state is able to work for industrial development without land reforms. In Japan, major industrial triumphs were achieved where 50 per cent of the land was held by 7.5 per cent of the households, and the other 50 per cent of the households held just 9 per cent of the land. "The impulse," to use Engels's words in a parallel situation, "has to come from *without*." The relationship between industrial and agricultural sectors—between towns and villages —assumes a crucial character.

BECAUSE OUR OTHER RESOURCES ARE LIMITED, labor has to be fructified with organization. The United Nations' experts, in their *Report,* are clear on the point: "We believe that an increase of 50 per cent (in yield of land) in two decades or less would be possible even without substantial increase in capital or any substantial reorganization of the agricultural system, if farmers were taught modern techniques—mainly the use of fertilizers and of seed control. For this to be achieved, there must be a very big effort at spreading agricultural extension services; something approaching a total of one per cent of the national income should be spent annually in underdeveloped countries upon such services, including agricultural research. We can think of no other investment that is likely to yield bigger returns in the immediate future."

In Japan, for instance, agricultural production was increased by 77 per cent between 1890 and 1920 mainly through the use of better seeds, manures, insecticides and the improvement of agricultural practices. This increase in output was brought about side by side with reduction of 14 per cent in the manpower employed in agriculture, which meant, therefore, a doubling of labor productivity; very little mechanical equipment was used for securing this result.

The possibilities of development on these lines are greater in countries like India and Pakistan, where the scope for intensive improvement is greater than in China or Japan. . . .

An equally important means of development is the mobilization of voluntary labor. In hundreds of thousands of villages there is scope for tremendous conservation and development; if the assistance given by the state is intelligently linked up with local labor, voluntarily offered, a new dimension of growth is opened up.

Such a mobilization of labor diverts to economic use labor lying unused, so it neither leads to inflation nor to depressing of consumption. It is really creation of new wealth. But such alertness, industry and cooperation would be evinced only where the tiller owns the land and is freed from the weight of all parasites, like landlords or money-lenders.

The necessary atmosphere of buoyancy and effort will not emerge unless work is found for surplus men in the villages, unless handicrafts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are revived and artisans are rehabilitated. Here too the ratio of output to input is greater in cottage industries than in big industries. "We have reason to expect the food and cottage industry goods to expand rapidly in response to relatively small expenditures; comparatively, the output of modern industries demands larger expenditure which are only slowly accompanied by increased output."* . . .

Electricity introduces a new factor in technology. Transmission of electric power was perfected only in the last decade of the nineteenth century, that is, after the demise of Marx and Engels. Their theories therefore have not adequately covered the new developments and possibilities. . . . Full development of electric power, and its widespread use for agricultural and industrial operations in rural areas would help to lift the life of the peasant to a new level. Until the change can be brought about, the handicrafts have to be protected and the artisans looked after. Assistance in obtaining scarce materials, cooperatives for credit and marketing, and protected markets against developed industries would preserve the skill and faith of millions of craftsmen. . . .

In undeveloped countries, the accent should initially be on light industry. It would be producing goods, not staples of consumption like textiles and shoes, which must be reserved for the handicrafts and artisans, but other kinds of manufacture, including perhaps yarn for handlooms. It is by exchanging the products of light industries that initially capital goods will have to be imported. From a strictly economic point of view, Pei-Kang Chang recommends such a policy: "China will undoubtedly depend in a great measure on the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union for the supply of heavy equipment, chemical products, and such durable goods as automobiles and trucks, and in return to pay for them, she will most probably export 'specialty goods' of which a large part will be produced in the light industries."**

In Soviet Russia, small industries had shown greater sturdiness in the period of dislocation brought about by the war and civil wars than large industries. The output of large-scale industries, the administration of which was extremely centralized, declined much more rapidly than did that of small industries. That is not the only factor in favor of small industry; the Soviet economists had also found that small industries not only need less capital—because of lower capitalization—but the velocity of circulation of capital in them is markedly higher.

The small industries lost their inherent advantage, because of the antagonistic policy of the Soviet state. On that point Bykov's observations are decisive: "Small-scale industry and, in particular, home handicrafts which manufactured mainly articles of general consumption, had not yet (1927-28) recovered to the same extent as big industry. This was

* "Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East, III."
** P. K. Chang in *Agriculture and Industrialization.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

due to the handicaps imposed on private industry and on craftsmen outside the cooperative associations, and in particular to difficulties in purchasing raw materials, which were bought up by the supply syndicates of big industry."*

The conclusion is obvious that the pattern of development is decided by State policy; if the Soviet state could direct development towards large-scale and heavy industry, another state can direct the development towards small-scale industry and a balanced economy. There is no inherent urge in economy towards big industry that cannot be channelled differently.

TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ELECTRIC POWER, small machines and transport, strategic heavy industries—such as hydro-electric stations, steel plants, locomotive and wagon factories and shipyards—will have to be built up. They can be built up either from national savings or from foreign aid. External assistance, under suitable circumstances, would help to build up heavy industry, because the aid can come as capital goods.

In this further development two precautions need to be taken: (1) maintain a balance between the different sectors of economy, (2) keep capitalization within check. Up to a point, Japan had shown some care in both directions. Russian and Japanese developments were almost at the same level in 1927-28; from that Russia moved on to construction that spelled a sevenfold increase in heavy industry in twelve years (1928-1940); in Japan the increase achieved was fivefold in twelve years (1930-1942). The strain on the people of Japan was however markedly less. There was no uprooting of peasants—only concentration of ownership in land and increased burden of debt on the peasant. Both these tendencies were later reversed and corrected by the land reform of 1950 and the wiping out of debt through the war inflation. In Russia, however, the trend of development—collectivization and mechanization—was irreversible. The Japanese concentration on smaller projects checked, at least till the early Forties, over-capitalization; Russia in her craze to overtake America, allowed herself to be made a victim of giant-mania.

Japan is not being offered as a model, but as a mild foil to the Soviet pattern of development. Japan could check over-capitalization because it had decentralized some processes of production, as in bicycle manufacturing, and had sought to distribute the work of production before the final assembly stage. Further research is essential in all the four directions: (1) check on over-capitalization, (2) balance between different industries, (3) decentralization of processes of production, and (4) dispersal of the stages of production.

* Alexander Bykov: *The Development of the Soviet Economic System.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Purposeful development, wherein developed industries do not encroach upon agriculture and other occupations on a lower technological level, is possible only where the key industries are owned by the State. To give freedom and *assistance* to the undulating expanse, the commanding heights must be with the State. *On that point,* every Asian should be a Leninist.

Even if capitalization is kept low and projects are kept small, the problem of capital accumulation would remain acute. By keeping the sectors of economy—banks, insurance firms, foreign trade, rail and sea transport and big industries where capital tends to accumulate—in the hands of the community, the strain of accumulation is considerably reduced. Banks, foreign trade, and internal *wholesale* trade in strategic materials are also influential levers of economic development, and their control by the community is of decisive importance. . . .

In all measures of nationalization small owners should be fully compensated. Refusal to compensate has resulted in vast losses to the national economy, and even the fathers of socialism were not opposed to compensation: "Under no conditions do we regard," Engels had said, "indemnity as inadmissible; very often Marx expressed to me the opinion that the cheapest way would be to buy off the whole gang." We agree with Marx's sentiments subject to one proviso: the buying should be accompanied by a graduated levy on capital.

The attitude towards the small entrepreneurs should be one of goodwill and cooperation. The State should develop institutions to assist them. The rule should be: *what is not nationalized will be nurtured with State aid. . . .*

In Asian countries, economic incentives cannot always be provided, nor do they unfailingly evoke response. The whole of Asia may not be as caste-ridden as India is, but it undoubtedly suffers from social stagnation and stratification. In India, of course, depressed humanity counts in millions: there are 50 million untouchables and 20 million aboriginals. Their social reclamation would impart a major impetus to development. For Asia social mobility, free movement sideways and upwards, would constitute a major incentive to economic development. Special educational facilities, priorities in distribution of lands and in employment offered to the submerged people would release vast creative energy.

Asian socialism therefore will not only be peasant conscious, decentralized, democratic and pacifist but also informed with ethical awareness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The following article forms an epilogue to a book that is to appear this fall under the imprint of Beacon Press. Tentatively entitled EROS AND CIVILIZATION, Mr. Marcuse's book deals with some of the social, political and cultural implications of Freudian theory. It should be stressed that, in the context of Mr. Marcuse's book, the article printed below follows upon a full development of his own views. Erich Fromm will reply to Mr. Marcuse's controversial article in our next issue.

—The Editors

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF FREUDIAN "REVISIONISM"

Herbert Marcuse

Psychoanalysis has changed its function in the intellectual culture of our time, in accordance with the fundamental social changes that occurred during the first half of the century. The collapse of the liberalistic era, the spreading totalitarian trend and the efforts to break this trend, are reflected in the position of psychoanalysis. During the twenty years of its development prior to the first World War, psychoanalysis elaborated the concepts for the psychological critique of the most highly praised achievement of the modern era: the individual. Freud demonstrated constraint, repression,* and renunciation as the stuff from which the "free personality" was made; he recognized the "general unhappiness" of society as the unsurpassable limits of cure and normality. Psychoanalysis was a radically critical theory. Later on, when Central and Eastern Europe were in revolutionary upheaval, it became clear to what extent psychoanalysis was still committed to the society whose secrets it revealed: the psychoanalytic conception of man, with its belief in the basic unchangeability of human nature, appeared as "reactionary": Freudian theory seemed to imply that the humanitarian ideals of socialism were humanly unattainable.

Then, the revisions of psychoanalysis began to gain momentum. It might be tempting to speak of a split into a left and right wing. The most serious attempt to develop the critical social theory implicit in Freud was made in Wilhelm Reich's earlier writings. In his *Einbruch*

* "Repression," repressive" is used in this article in the non-technical sense to denote both conscious and unconscious, external and internal processes of restriction, constraint, and suppression.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

der Sexualmoral (1931), Wilhelm Reich emphasized the extent to which sexual repression was enforced by the interests of domination and exploitation, and the extent to which these interests were in turn re-inforced by sexual repression. However, Reich's notion of sexual repression remains undifferentiated, the historical dynamic of the sex instincts and of their fusion with the destructive impulses is neglected (Reich rejects Freud's hypothesis of the Death Instinct and the whole depth dimension revealed in Freud's late metapsychology). Consequently, sexual liberation *per se* becomes for Reich a panacea for individual and social ills. The problem of sublimation is minimized; no essential distinction is made between repressive and non-repressive sublimation, and progress in freedom appears as a mere release of sexuality. The critical sociological insights contained in Reich's earlier writings are thus arrested; a sweeping primitivism becomes prevalent which foreshadows the wild and fantastic hobbies of Reich's later years.

On the "right wing" of psychoanalysis, Carl Jung's psychology soon became an obscurantist pseudo-mythology.[1] The "center" of revisionism took shape in the cultural and inter-personal schools—the most popular trend of psychoanalysis today. We shall try to show that in these schools, psychoanalytic theory turns into ideology: the "personality" and its creative potentialities are resurrected in the face of a reality which has all but eliminated the conditions for the personality and its fulfilment. Freud had recognized the work of repression in the highest values of Western civilization—they presuppose and perpetuate unfreedom and suffering; the Neo-Freudian schools propagate the very same values as cure against unfreedom and suffering—as the triumph over repression. This intellectual feat is accomplished by expurgating the instinctual dynamic and reducing its part in the mental life. Thus purified, the psyche can again be redeemed by idealistic ethics and religion; and the psychoanalytic theory of the mental apparatus can be rewritten as a philosophy of the soul. In doing so, the revisionists discarded those of Freud's psychological tools which were incompatible with the anachronistic revival of philosophical idealism—the very tools with which Freud had uncovered the explosive instinctual *and* social roots of the personality. Moreover, secondary factors and relationships (of the mature person and his cultural environment) are now given the dignity of primary processes—a switch in orientation designed to emphasize the influence of the social reality on the formation of the personality. However, we believe that in this shift of emphasis the exact opposite happens: the impact of society on the psyche is weakened. Whereas Freud, focusing on the vicissitudes of the primary instincts, had discovered society in the most concealed layer of the genus and individual man, the revisionists, aiming at the reified, ready-made form rather than at the origin of the societal institutions and relations, fail to comprehend what these institutions and relations have done to the personality whom they are supposed to fulfill. Confronted with the revisionist schools, Freud's theory now assumes a new significance: it reveals more than ever before the depth of its criticism, and—perhaps

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the first time—those of its elements which transcend the prevailing order and link the theory of repression with that of its abolition.

The strengthening of this link was the initial impulse behind the revisionism of the cultural school. Erich Fromm's early articles are devoted to the effort to free Freud's theory from its identification with present-day society, to sharpen the psychoanalytic notions which reveal the connection between instinctual and economic structures and at the same time indicate the possibility of progress beyond patricentric-acquisitive culture. Fromm stresses the sociological substance of Freud's theory: psychoanalysis understands the socio-psychological phenomena as

> processes of active and passive adjustment of the instinctual apparatus to the socio-economic situation. The instinctual apparatus itself is—in certain of its foundations—a biological datum, but to a high degree modifiable; the economic conditions are the primary modifying factors.[2]

Underlying the societal organization of the human existence are basic libidinal wants and needs—highly plastic and pliable, they are shaped and utilized to "cement" the respective society. Thus, in what Fromm calls the patricentric-acquisitive society the libidinal impulses and their satisfaction (and deflection) are co-ordinated with the interests of domination and thereby become a stabilizing force which binds the majority to the ruling minority. Anxiety, love, confidence—even the will to freedom and solidarity with the group to which one belongs[3] come to serve the economically structured relationships of domination and subordination. By the same token, however, fundamental changes in the social structure will entail corresponding changes in the instinctual structure. With the historical obsolescence of an established society, with the growth of its inner antagonisms, the traditional mental ties are loosening:

> Libidinal forces become free for new forms of utilization and thus change their social function. Now they no longer contribute to the preservation of society but strive for the building of new social formations; they cease, as it were, to be cement and instead become dynamite.[4]

Fromm followed up this conception in his article on "The Socio-psychological Significance of the Theory of Matriarchy."[5] Freud's own insights into the historical character of the modifications of the impulses vitiate his equation of the Reality Principle with the norms of patricentric-acquisitive culture. Fromm emphasizes that the idea of a matricentric culture—regardless of its anthropological merit—envisions a Reality Principle geared not to the interest of domination, but to gratified libidinal relations among men. The instinctual structure demands rather than precludes the rise of a free civilization on the basis of the achievements of patricentric culture, but through the transformation of its institutions:

> Sexuality offers one of the most elemental and strongest possibilities of gratification and happiness. If these possibilities would be allowed within the limits set by the need for the productive development of the person-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ality rather than by the need for the domination of the masses, the fulfilment of this one fundamental happiness would of necessity lead to an increase in the claim for gratification and happiness in other spheres of the human existence. The fulfilment of this claim requires the availability of the material means for its satisfaction and must therefore entail the explosion of the prevailing social order.[6]

The social content of Freudian theory becomes manifest: sharpening of the psychoanalytical concepts means sharpening their critical function, their opposition to the prevailing form of society. And this critical sociological function of psychoanalysis derives from the fundamental role of sexuality as a "productive force"; the libidinal claims propel progress toward freedom and universal gratification of human needs beyond the patricentric-acquisitive stage. Conversely, the weakening of the psychoanalytic conception, and especially of the theory of sexuality, must lead to a weakening of the sociological critique and to a reduction of the social substance of psychoanalysis. Contrary to appearance, this is what has happened in the "cultural schools." Paradoxically (but only apparently paradoxically), such a development was the consequence of the improvements in therapy.

Fromm has devoted an admirable paper to "The Social Conditions of Psychoanalytic Therapy," in which he showed that the psychoanalytic situation (between analyst and patient) is a specific expression of "bourgeois-liberalist toleration" and as such dependent on the existence of such toleration in the society. But behind the tolerant attitude of the "neutral" analyst is concealed "respect for the social taboos of the bourgeoisie."[7] Fromm traces the effectiveness of these taboos at the very core of Freudian theory, in Freud's position toward sexual morality. With this attitude, Fromm contrasts another conception of therapy, first perhaps formulated by Ferenczi, according to which the analyst rejects patricentric-authoritarian taboos and enters into a positive rather than neutral relation with the patient. The new conception is chiefly characterized by an "unconditional affirmation of the patient's claim for happiness" and the "liberation of morality from its tabooistic features."[8] However, with these demands, psychoanalysis faces a fateful dilemma. The "claim for happiness," if truly affirmed, aggravates the conflict with a society which allows only controlled happiness, and the exposure of the moral taboos extends this conflict to an attack on the vital protective layers of society. This may still be practicable in a social environment where toleration is a constitutive element of personal, economic, and political relationships, but must endanger the very idea of "cure" and even the very existence of psychoanalysis when society can no longer afford such toleration. The affirmative attitude toward the claim for happiness then becomes practicable only if happiness and the "productive" development of the personality are redefined so that they become compatible with the prevailing values, that is to say, if they are internalized and idealized. And this redefinition must in turn entail a weakening of the explosive content of psychoanalytic theory as well as of its explosive social criticism. If this is indeed (as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the author thinks) the course which revisionism has taken, then it is due to the objective social dynamic of the period: in an anti-liberal society, individual happiness and productive development are in contradiction to society; if they are defined as values to be realized within this society, they become themselves repressive.

II

The subsequent discussion is concerned only with the later stages of Neo-Freudian psychology where the regressive features of the movement appear as predominant. The discussion has no other purpose than to throw in relief, by contrast, the critical implications of psychoanalytic theory emphasized in the preceding chapters of this study; the *therapeutical* merits of the revisionist schools are entirely outside the scope of this discussion.

This limitation is enforced not only by my own lack of competence but also by a discrepancy between theory and therapy inherent in psychoanalysis itself. Freud was fully aware of this discrepancy, which may be formulated—much over-simplified—as follows: while psychoanalytic theory recognizes that the sickness of the individual is ultimately caused and sustained by the sickness of his civilization, psychoanalytic therapy aims at curing the individual so that he can continue to function as part of this civilization without surrendering to it altogether. The acceptance of the Reality Principle, with which psychoanalytic therapy ends, means to the individual acceptance of the civilized regimentation of his instinctual needs, especially of sexuality.

In Freud's theory, civilization appears as established in contradiction to the primary instincts and to the Pleasure Principle. But the latter survives in the Id, and the civilized Ego must permanently fight its own timeless past and forbidden future. Theoretically, the difference between mental health and neurosis lies only in the degree and effectiveness of resignation: mental health is successful, efficient resignation—normally so efficient that it shows forth as moderately happy satisfaction. Normality is a precarious condition: "Neurosis and psychosis are both of them an expression of the rebellion of the Id against the outer world, of its 'pain,' unwillingness to adapt itself to necessity —to *ananke,* or, if one prefers, of its incapacity to do so."[9] This rebellion, although originating in the instinctual "nature" of man, is a disease which has to be cured—not only because it is against a hopelessly superior power, but because it is against "necessity." Repression, unhappiness *must be* if civilization shall prevail. The "goal" of the Pleasure Principle, namely, "to be happy," "is not attainable,"[10] although the efforts to attain it shall not and cannot be abandoned. In the last analysis, the question is only how much resignation the individual can bear without busting up. In this sense, therapy is a course in resignation: a great deal will be gained if we succeed in "transforming your hysterical misery into everyday unhappiness" which is the usual lot of mankind.[11] This aim certainly does not (or should not) imply that the patient becomes capable of adjusting completely to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an environment repressive of his mature aspirations and abilities; still, the analyst, as a physician, must accept the social framework of facts in which the patient has to live and which he cannot alter.[12]

This irreducible core of conformity is further strengthened by Freud's conviction that the repressive basis of civilization cannot be changed anyway—not even on the supra-individual, societal scale. Consequently, the critical insights of psychoanalysis gain their full force only in the field of theory—and perhaps particularly where theory is farthest removed from therapy: in Freud's "metapsychology." The revisionist schools have obliterated this discrepancy between theory and therapy by assimilating the former to the latter. This assimilation took place in two ways: first the most speculative and "metaphysical" concepts which were not subject to any clinical verification (such as the Death Instinct; the hypothesis of the Primal Horde, the killing of the primal father and its consequences) were minimized or discarded altogether. Moreover, in this process some of Freud's most decisive concepts (the relation between Id and Ego; the function of the unconscious; the scope and significance of sexuality) were redefined in such a way that their explosive connotations were all but eliminated. The depth dimension of the conflict between the individual and his society, between the instinctual structure and the realm of consciousness was flattened out. Psychoanalysis was re-oriented on the traditional consciousness—psychology of pre-Freudian texture. The right to such re-orientations in the interest of successful therapy and practice is not questioned here, but the revisionists have converted the elimination of Freudian theory to a new theory, and the significance of this theory alone will be discussed presently. The discussion will neglect the difference among the various revisionist groups and concentrate on the theoretical attitude common to all of them. It is distilled from the representative works of Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Harry Stack Sullivan; Clara Thompson[13] is taken as a representative historian of the revisionists.

The chief objections of the revisionists to Freud may be summed up as follows: Freud has grossly underrated the extent to which the individual and his neurosis are determined by conflicts with his environment. Freud's "biological orientation" led him to concentrate on the phylogenetic and ontogenetic *past* of the individual: he considered the character as essentially fixed with the fifth or sixth year (if not earlier), and he interpreted the fate of the individual in terms of primary instincts and their vicissitudes, especially sexuality. In contrast, the revisionists shift the emphasis "from the past to the present,"[14] from the biological to the cultural level, from the "constitution" of the individual to his environment.[15] "One can understand the biological development better if one discards the concept of libido altogether" and instead interprets the different stages "in terms of growth and of human relations."[16] Then the subject of psychoanalysis becomes the "total personality" in its "relatedness to the world," and the "constructive aspects of the individual," his "productive and positive potentiali-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ties" receive the attention they deserve. Freud did not see that sickness, treatment, and cure are a matter of "interpersonal relationships" in which total personalities are engaged on both sides. Freud's conception is predominantly relativistic: he assumed that psychology can "help us to understand the motivation of value judgments but cannot help in establishing the validity of the value judgments themselves."[17] Consequently, his psychology contains no ethics or only his personal ethics. Moreover, Freud had a "static" concept of society and thought that society developed as a "mechanism for controlling man's instincts," whereas the revisionists know "from the study of comparative cultures" that "man is not biologically endowed with dangerous fixed animal drives and that the only function of society is to control these." They insist that society "is not a static set of laws instituted in the past at the time of the murder of the primal father, but is rather a growing, changing, developing network of interpersonal experiences and behavior." To this, the following insights are added:

> One cannot become a human being except through cultural experience. Society creates new needs in people. Some of the new needs lead in a constructive direction and stimulate further development. Of such a nature are the ideas of justice, equality and cooperation. Some of the new needs lead in a destructive direction and are not good for man. Wholesale competitiveness and the ruthless exploitation of the helpless are examples of destructive products of culture. When the destructive elements predominate, we have a situation which fosters war.[18]

This passage may serve as a starting point for exemplifying the decline of theory in the revisionist schools. There is first the laboring of the obvious, of routine wisdom. Then there is the adduction of sociological concepts. In Freud, they are included in and developed by the basic concepts themselves; here, they appear as uncomprehended, external factors. There is furthermore the distinction between good and bad, constructive and destructive (Fromm: productive and unproductive, positive and negative), which is not derived from any theoretical principle but simply taken from the prevalent ideology. For this reason, the distinction is merely eclectic, extraneous to theory, and tantamount to the conformistic "accentuate the positive": Freud was right, life is bad, repressive, destructive—but it isn't *so* bad, repressive, destructive; there are also the constructive, productive aspects. Society is not only this, but also that; man is not only against but also for himself. These distinctions are meaningless and—as we shall try to show—even wrong unless the task (which Freud took upon himself) is fulfilled: to demonstrate how, under the impact of civilization, the two "aspects" are interrelated in the instinctual dynamic itself, and how the one inevitably turns into the other by virtue of this dynamic. Short of such demonstration, the revisionist improvement of Freud's "one-sidedness" is a blank discarding of his fundamental theoretical conception. However, the term eclecticism does not adequately express the substance of the revisionist philosophy. Its consequences for psychoanalytic theory are much graver: the revisionist "supplementation" of Freudian theory,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

especially their adduction of cultural and environmental factors consecrate a false picture of civilization and particularly of present-day society—in minimizing the extent and depth of the conflict, the revisionists proclaim a false but easy solution. We shall give here only a brief illustration:

One of the most cherished demands of the revisionists is that the "total personality" of the individual rather than his early childhood or his biological structure or his psychosomatic condition be made the subject of psychoanalysis:

> The infinite diversity of personalities is in itself characteristic of human existence. By personality I understand the totality of inherited and acquired psychic qualities which are characteristic of one individual and which make the individual unique.[19]

> I think it is clear that Freud's conception of counter-transference is to be distinguished from the present-day conception of analysis as an interpersonal process. In the interpersonal situation, the analyst is seen as relating to his patient not only with his distorted affects but with his healthy personality also. That is, the analytic situation is essentially a human relationship . . . [20]

> The preconception to which I am leading is this: personality tends toward the state that we call mental health or interpersonal adjustive success, handicaps by way of acculteration notwithstanding. The basic direction of the organism is forward.[21]

The above passages testify to the confusion between ideology and reality prevalent among the revisionist schools. It is true that man appears as an individual who "integrates" a diversity of inherited and acquired qualities into a total personality, and that the latter develops in relating himself to the world (things and people) under manifold and varying conditions. But this personality and its development are *pre*formed down to the deepest instinctual structure, and this preformation, the work of accumulated civilization, makes the diversities and the autonomy of individual "growth" secondary phenomena. How much reality is behind individuality depends on the scope, form, and effectiveness of the repressive controls prevalent at the respective stage of civilization. The autonomous personality, in the sense of creative "uniqueness" and fullness of its existence, has always been the privilege of a very few.

At the present stage, the personality tends towards a standardized reaction pattern established by the hierarchy of power and functions and by its technical, intellectual, and cultural apparatus. The analyst and his patient share this alienation, and since it does not usually manifest itself in any neurotic symptom but rather as the hallmark of "mental health," it does not appear in the revisionist consciousness. When the process of alienation is discussed, it is usually treated, not as the whole that it is, but as a negative aspect of the whole. To be sure, personality has not disappeared (this would be a fatefully wrong formulation): it continues to flower, it is even fostered and educated, but in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such a way that the expressions of personality fit and sustain perfectly the socially desired pattern of behavior and thought. They thus tend to cancel individuality. This process, which has been completed in the "mass culture" of late industrial civilization, vitiates the concept of interpersonal relations if it is to denote more than the undeniable fact that all relations in which the human being finds itself are either relations to other persons or abstractions from them. If, beyond this truism, the concept implies more, namely, that "two or more persons come to define an integrated situation" which is made up of "individuals"[22]—then the implication is fallacious. For the individual situations are the derivatives and appearances of the *general* fate, and, as Freud has shown, it is the latter which contains the clue to the fate of the individual; the general repressiveness shapes the individual and universalizes even his most personal features.

Accordingly, Freud's theory is consistently oriented on early infancy —the formative period of the universal fate in the individual. The subsequent mature relations "recreate" the formative ones. The decisive relations are thus those which are the *least* inter-personal. In an alienated world, specimens of the genus confront each other: parent-child, male-female; then master-servant, boss-employee; they are interrelated at first in specific modes of the universal alienation. If and when they cease to be so and grow into truly personal relations, they still retain the universal repressiveness which they surmount as their comprehended negative—then they do not require treatment.

III

Psychoanalysis elucidates the universal in the individual experience. To that extent, and only to that extent can psychoanalysis break the reification in which the human relations are petrified. The revisionists fail to recognize, or fail to draw the consequences from the actual state of alienation which makes the person into an exchangeable function and the personality into an ideology. In contrast, Freud's basic "biologistic" concepts reach beyond the ideology and its reflexes: his refusal to treat a reified society as a "developing network of interpersonal experiences and behavior" and an alienated individual as a "total personality" corresponds to the reality. If he refrains from regarding the inhuman existence as a passing negative aspect of progressing humanity, he is more human than the good-natured tolerance of his critics who brand his "inhuman" coldness. Freud does not readily believe that the "basic direction of the organism is forward." Even without the hypothesis of the Death Instinct and of the conservative nature of the instincts, Sullivan's proposition is shallow and questionable. The "basic" direction of the organism appears as a quite different one in the persistent impulses towards relief of tension, toward fulfilment, rest, passivity. The sado-masochistic tendencies can hardly be associated with a forward direction in mental health—unless "forward" and "mental health" are redefined to mean almost the opposite of what they are in our social order—"a social order which is in some ways grossly inade-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quate for the development of healthy and happy human beings."[22a] Sullivan refrains from such a redefinition—he makes his concepts conform with conformity:

> The person who believes that he *voluntarily* cut loose from his earlier moorings and *by choice* accepted new dogmata, in which he has diligently indoctrinated himself, is quite certain to be a person who has suffered great insecurity. He is often a person whose self-organization is derogatory and hateful. The new movement has given him group support for the expression of ancient personal hostilities that are now directed against the group from which he has come. The new ideology rationalizes destructive activity to such effect that it seems almost, if not quite, constructive. The new ideology is especially palliative of conflict in its promise of a better world that is to rise from the debris to which the present order must first be reduced. In this Utopia, he and his fellows will be good and kind—for them will be no more injustice, and so forth. If his is one of the more radical groups, the activity of more remote memory in the synthesis of decisions and choice may be suppressed almost completely, and the activity of prospective revery channelled rigidly in the dogmatic pattern. In this case, except for his dealings with his fellow radicals, the man may act as if he had acquired the psychopathic type of personality discussed in the third lecture. He shows no durable grasp of his own reality or that of others, and his actions are controlled by the most immediate opportunism, without consideration of the probable future.[23]

The idea does not occur that the insecurity was rational and reasonable, that not his but the others' self-organization was derogatory and hateful, that the destructiveness involved in the new dogma might indeed be constructive in so far as it aims at a higher stage of realization. This psychology has no other objective standards of value than the prevailing ones: health, maturity, achievement are taken as they are defined by the given society—in spite of Sullivan's awareness that in our culture, maturity is "often no particular reflection on anything more than one's socioeconomic status and the like."[24]

Deep conformity holds sway over this psychology, which suspects all those who "cut loose from their early moorings" and become "radicals" as neurotics (the description quoted above fits all of them, from Jesus to Lenin, from Socrates to Giordano Bruno), and which identifies almost automatically the "promise of a better world" with "Utopia," its substance with "revery," and mankind's sacred dream of justice for all with personal resentment (no more injustice "for them") of maladjusted types. This "operational" identification of mental health with "adjustive success" and progress eliminates all the reservations with which Freud hedged the therapeutic objective of adjustment to an inhuman society[25] and thus commits psychoanalysis to this society far more than Freud ever did.

Behind all the differences between the historical forms of society, Freud has seen the basic inhumanity common to all of them, and the repressive controls which perpetuate, in the instinctual structure itself, the domination of man by man. By virtue of this insight Freud's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"static concept of society" is closer to the truth than the dynamic sociological concepts supplied by the revisionists. The notion that "civilization and its discontent" had their roots in the biological constitution of man profoundly influenced Freud's concept of the function and goal of therapy. The personality which the individual is to develop, the potentialities he is to realize, the happiness he is to attain—they are regimented from the very beginning, and their content can be defined only in terms of this regimentation. Freud destroys the traditional illusions of idealistic ethics: the "personality" is but a "broken" individual who has internalized and successfully utilized repression and aggression. Considering what civilization has made of man, the difference in the development of personalities is chiefly that between an unproportional and a proportional share of that "everyday unhappiness" which is the common lot of mankind. The latter is all that therapy can achieve.

Over and against such a "minimum program," Erich Fromm and the other revisionists proclaim a higher goal of therapy: "optimal development of a person's potentialities and the realization of his individuality." Now it is precisely this goal which is essentially unattainable—not because of limitations in the psychoanalytic techniques but because the established civilization itself, in its very structure, denies it. Either one defines "personality" and "individuality" in terms of their possibilities *within* the established form of civilization, then their realization is for the vast majority tantamount to successful adjustment. Or one defines them in terms of their transcending content, including their socially denied potentialities beyond (and beneath) their actual existence: in this case, their realization would imply transgression beyond the established form of civilization and to radically new modes of "personality" and "individuality" incompatible with the prevailing ones. Today, this would mean "curing" the patient to become a rebel or (which is saying the same thing) a martyr. The revisionist concept vacillates between the two definitions. Fromm revives all the time-honored values of idealistic ethics as if nobody had ever demonstrated their conformistic and repressive features. He talks of the productive realization of the personality, of care, responsibility, and respect for one's fellow men, of productive love and happiness as if man could actually practice all this and still remain sane and full of "well-being" in a society which Fromm himself describes as one of total alienation, dominated by the commodity relations of the "market." In such a society, the self-realization of the "personality" can only proceed on the basis of a double repression: first the "purification" of the Pleasure Principle and the internalization of happiness and freedom, secondly, their reasonable restriction until they become compatible with the prevailing unfreedom and unhappiness. As a result, productiveness, love, responsibility become "values" only in so far as they contain manageable resignation and are practiced within the framework of socially useful activities—in other words, after repressive sublimation, and then they involve the effective denial of free productiveness and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

responsibility—the renunciation of happiness. For example, productiveness, proclaimed as a goal of the healthy individual must normally (that is, outside the creative, "neurotic" and "eccentric" exceptions) show forth in good business, administration, service, with the reasonable expectation of recognized success. Love must be semi-sublimated and even inhibited libido, keeping in line with the sanctioned conditions imposed on sexuality. This is the accepted, "realistic" meaning of productiveness and love. But the very same terms also denote the *free* realization of man, or the idea of such realization. The revisionist usage of these terms plays on this ambiguity which designates both the unfree and the free, the mutilated and the integral faculties of man, thus vesting the established Reality Principle with the grandeur of promises that can be redeemed only *beyond* this Reality Principle.

This ambiguity makes the revisionist philosophy appear as critical where it is conformistic, as political where it is moralistic. Often, the *style* alone betrays the attitude. It would be revealing to make a comparative analysis of the Freudian and Neo-Freudian style. The latter, in the more philosophical writings, comes frequently close to that of the sermon, or of the social worker; it is elevated and yet clear; permeated with well-meaning and tolerance and yet moved by an "esprit de sérieux" which makes transcendental values into facts of everyday life. What has become a sham is taken as real. In contrast, there is a strong undertone of irony in Freud's usage of "freedom," "happiness," "personality"—these terms seem to have invisible quotation marks, or their negative content is explicitly stated. Freud refrains from calling repression by any other name than its own; the Neo-Freudians sometimes sublimate it into its opposite.

But the revisionist combination of psychoanalysis with idealistic ethics is not simply a glorification of adjustment. The Neo-Freudian "sociological" or "cultural" orientation provides the other side of the picture—the "not only but also." The therapy of adjustment is rejected in the strongest terms;[26] the "deification" of success is denounced.[27] Present-day society and culture are accused of greatly impeding the realization of the healthy and mature person; the principle of "competitiveness, and the potential hostility that accompanies it, pervades all human relationships."[28] The revisionists claim that their psychoanalysis is in itself a *critique* of society:

> The aim of the 'cultural school' goes beyond merely enabling man to submit to the restrictions of his society; in so far as it is possible it seeks to free him from its irrational demands and make him more able to develop his potentialities and to assume leadership in building a more constructive society.[29]

The tension between health and knowledge, normality and freedom, which animated Freud's entire work, here disappears; a qualifying "in so far as it is possible" is the only trace left of the explosive contradiction in the aim. "Leadership in building a more constructive society" is to be combined with normal functioning in the established society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This philosophy is achieved by directing the criticism against surface phenomena, while accepting the basic premises of the criticized society. Fromm devotes a large part of his writing to the critique of the "market economy" and its ideology which place strong barriers in the way of productive development.[30] But here the matter rests. The critical insights do not lead to a transvaluation of the values of productiveness and the "higher self"—which are exacly the values of the criticized culture. The character of the revisionist philosophy shows forth in the assimilation of the positive and negative, the promise and its betrayal. The affirmation absorbs the critique. The reader is left with the conviction that the "higher values" can and should be practiced within the very conditions which betray them—and they can be practiced because the revisionist philosopher accepts them in their adjusted and idealized form—on the terms of the established Reality Principle. Fromm, who has demonstrated the repressive features of internalization as few other analysts have done, revives the ideology of internalization. The "adjusted" person is blamed because he has betrayed the "higher self," the "human values"; therefore he is haunted by "inner emptiness and insecurity" in spite of his triumph in the "battle for success." Far better off is the person who has attained "inner strength and integrity": though he may be less successful than his "unscrupulous neighbor,"

> he will have security, judgment, and objectivity which will make him much less vulnerable to changing fortunes and opinions of others and will in many areas enhance his ability for constructive work.[31]

The style suggests the Power of Positive Thinking to which the revisionist critique succumbs. Not the values are spurious but the context is in which they are defined and proclaimed: "inner strength" has the connotation of that unconditional freedom which can be practiced even in chains and which Fromm himself once denounced in his analysis of the Reformation.[32] If the values of "inner strength and integrity" are supposed to be more and other than the character traits which the alienated society expects from any good citizen in his business (in which case they merely serve to sustain alienation), then they must pertain to a consciousness that has broken through the alienation as well as its values. But to such consciousness these values themselves become intolerable because it recognizes them as accessories to the enslavement of man. The "higher self" thrones over the domesticated impulses and aspirations of the individual who has sacrificed and renounced his "lower self" not only in so far as it is incompatible with civilization but in so far as it is incompatible with repressive civilization. Such renunciation may indeed be an indispensable step on the road to human progress. However, Freud's question whether the higher values of culture have not been achieved at too great a cost for the individual should be serious enough to enjoin the psychoanalytic philosopher from preaching them without revealing their forbidden content—without showing what they have *denied* to the individual.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What this omission does to psychoanalytic theory may be illustrated by contrasting Fromm's and Freud's idea of love. Fromm writes:

> Genuine love is rooted in productiveness and may properly be called, therefore, 'productive love.' Its essence is the same whether it is the mother's love for the child, our love for man, or the erotic love between two individuals . . . . certain basic elements may be said to be characteristic of all forms of productive love. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.[33]

Compare with this ideological formulation Freud's analysis of the instinctual ground and underground of love, of the long and painful process in which sexuality with all its polymorphous perversity is tamed and inhibited until it ultimately becomes susceptible to fusion with tenderness and affection—a fusion which remains precarious and never quite overcomes its destructive elements. Compare with Fromm's sermon on love Freud's almost incidental remarks in "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life":

> . . . we shall not be able to deny that the behavior in love of the men of present-day civilization bears in general the character of the psychically impotent type. In only very few people of culture are the two strains of tenderness and sensuality duly fused into one: the man almost always feels his sexual activity hampered by his respect for the woman and only develops full sexual potency when he finds himself in the presence of a lower type of sexual object . . . [34]

According to Freud, love, in our culture, can and must be practiced as "aim-inhibited sexuality," with all the taboos and constraints placed upon it by a monogamic-patriarchal society. Beyond its legitimate manifestations, love is destructive and by no means conducive to productiveness and constructive work. Love, taken seriously, is outlawed:

> There is no longer any place in present-day civilized life for a simple natural love between two human beings.[35]

But to the revisionists, productiveness, love, happiness, and health merge in grand harmony; civilization has not caused any conflicts between them which the mature person could not solve without serious damage.

IV

Once the human aspirations and their fulfilment are internalized and sublimated to the "higher self," the social issues become primarily spiritual issues, and their solution becomes a *moral* task. The sociological concreteness of the revisionists reveals itself as surface: the decisive struggles are fought out in the "soul" of man. Present-day authoritarianism and the "deification of the machine and of success" threaten the "most precious spiritual possessions" of man.[36] The revisionist minimization of the biological sphere, and especially of the role of sexuality shifts the emphasis not only from the unconscious to consciousness, from the Id to the Ego, but also from the pre-sublimated to the sublimated expressions of the human existence. As the repression

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of instinctual gratification recedes into the background and loses its decisive importance for the realization of man, the depth of societal repression is reduced. Consequently, the revisionist emphasis on the influence of "social conditions" in the development of the neurotic personality is sociologically and psychologically far more inconsequential than Freud's "neglect" of these conditions. The revisionist mutilation of the instinct theory leads to the traditional devaluation of the sphere of material needs in favor of spiritual needs. Society's part in the regimentation of man is thus played down; and in spite of the outspoken critique of some social institutions, the revisionist sociology accepts the foundations on which these institutions rest.

Neurosis, too, appears as an essentially *moral* problem, and the individual is held responsible for the failure of his self-realization. Society, to be sure, receives a share of the indictment, but, in the last analysis, it is man himself who is at fault. "Looking at his creation, he can say, truly, it is good. But looking at himself what can he say? . . . While we have created wonderful things we have failed to make of ourselves beings for whom this tremendous effort would seem worthwhile. Ours is a life not of brotherliness, happiness, contentment but of spiritual chaos and bewilderment . . . "[37] The disharmony between society and the individual is stated and left alone. Whatever society may do to the individual, it prevents neither him nor the analyst from concentrating on the total personality and its productive development. According to Horney, society creates "certain typical difficulties . . . which, accumulated, may lead to the formation of neurosis."[38] According to Fromm, the negative impact of society upon the individual is more serious, but this is only a challenge to practice productive love and productive thinking. The decision rests with man's "ability to take himself, his life and happiness seriously; on his willingness to face his and his society's moral problem. It rests upon his courage to be himself and to be for himself."[39] In the period of totalitarianism, where the individual has so entirely become the subject-object of manipulation that, for the "healthy and normal" person, even the idea of a distinction between being "for himself" and "for others" has become meaningless, where the omnipotent apparatus punishes real non-conformity with ridicule and defeat—in such a situation the Neo-Freudian philosopher tells the individual to be himself and for himself. To the revisionists, the brute fact of societal repression has transformed itself into a "moral problem"—as it has done in the conformist philosophy of all ages. And as the clinical fact of neurosis becomes "in the last analysis, a symptom of moral failure,"[40] the "psychoanalytic cure of the soul" becomes education in the attainment of a "religious" attitude.[41]

The escape from psychoanalysis to internalized ethics and religion is the consequence of the revision of psychoanalytic theory. If the "wound" in the human existence is not operative in the biological constitution of man, and if it is not caused and sustained by the very structure of civilization, then the depth dimension is removed from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under psychoanalysis, and the (ontogenetic and phylogenetic) conflict between pre- and supra-individual forces appears as a problem of the rational or irrational, moral or immoral behavior of conscious individuals. The substance of psychoanalytic theory lies not simply in the discovery of the role of the unconscious but in the description of its specific instinctual dynamic, of the vicissitudes of the two basic instincts. Only the history of these vicissitudes reveals the full depth of the oppression which civilization imposes upon man. If sexuality does not play the constitutional role which Freud attributed to it, then there is no fundamental conflict between the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle; man's instinctual nature is "purified" and adapted to attain, without mutilation, socially useful and recognized happiness. It was precisely because he saw in sexuality the representative of the integral Pleasure Principle that Freud was able to discover the common roots of the "general" as well as neurotic unhappiness in a depth far below all individual experience, and to recognize a primary "constitutional" repression underlying all consciously experienced and administered repression. He took this discovery very seriously—much too seriously to identify happiness with its efficient sublimation in productive activities. Therefore he considered a civilization oriented on the realization of happiness as a catastrophe, as the end of all civilization. For Freud, a whole world separates freedom and happiness from their pseudos which are practiced and preached in a repressive civilization. The revisionists have no such trouble. Since they have spiritualized freedom and happiness, they can say that "the problem of production has been virtually solved:"[42]

> Never before has man come so close to the fulfillment of his most cherished hopes as today. Our scientific discoveries and technical achievements enable us to visualize the day when the table will be set for all who want to eat . . .[43]

These statements are true—but only in the light of their contradiction: precisely because man has never come so close to the fulfillment of his hopes, he has never been so strictly restrained from fulfilling them; precisely because we can visualize the universal satisfaction of individual needs, the strongest obstacles are placed in the way to such satisfaction. Only if the sociological analysis elucidates this connection does it go beyond Freud; otherwise it is merely an inconsequential adornment, bought at the expense of mutilating Freud's theory of instincts. Freud had established a substantive link between human freedom and happiness on the one hand and sexuality on the other. the latter provided the primary source for the former and at the same time the ground for their necessary restriction in civilization. The revisionist solution of the conflict through the spiritualization of freedom and happiness demanded the weakening of the link. No matter how much the therapeutical findings motivated the theoretical reduction in the role of sexuality, such reduction was indispensable for the revisionist philosophy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[Here follows a brief discussion of the Neo-Freudian concept of sexuality and of the Oedipus complex: in the revisionist interpretation, this sphere is presented without exposing the instinctual danger zones of society.]

The same beneficial result is obtained by the rejection of the Death Instinct. The hypothesis of the Death Instinct and its role in civilized aggression shed light on one of the neglected enigmas of civilization: it revealed the hidden unconscious tie which binds the oppressed to their oppressors, the soldiers to their generals, the individuals to their masters. The wholesale destructions which marked the progress of civilization within the framework of domination were perpetuated, in the face of their possible abolition, by the instinctual agreement with their executioners on the part of the human instruments and victims. Freud wrote during the first World War:

> Think of the colossal brutality, cruelty and mendacity which is now allowed to spread itself over the civilized world. Do you really believe that a handful of unprincipled placehunters and corrupters of men would have succeeded in letting loose all this latent evil, if the millions of their followers were not also guilty?[44]

But the impulses which this hypothesis assumes are incompatible with the moralistic philosophy of progress espoused by the revisionists. Karen Horney states succinctly the revisionist position:

> Freud's assumption [of a Death Instinct] implies that the ultimate motivation for hostility or destructiveness lies in the impulse to destroy. Thus he turns into its opposite our belief that we destroy in order to live: we live in order to destroy.[45]

This rendering of Freud's conception is incorrect: he did not assume that we live in order to destroy; the destruction instinct operates against the Life Instincts or in their service; moreover, not destruction *per se* is the objective of the Death Instinct but the elimination of the need for destruction. According to Horney, we wish to destroy because we "are or feel endangered, humiliated, abused," because we want to defend "our safety or our happiness or what appears to us as such." No psychoanalytic theory was necessary to arrive at these conclusions with which individual and national aggression has been justified since times immemorial. Either our safety is really threatened, then our wish to destroy is a sensible and rational reaction; or we only "feel" it is threatened, then the individual and supra-individual reasons for this feeling have to be explored.

The revisionist rejection of the Death Instinct is accompanied by an argument which indeed seems to point up the "reactionary" implications of Freudian theory as contrasted with the progressive sociological orientation of the revisionists: Freud's assumption of a Death Instinct

> paralyzes any effort to search in the specific cultural conditions for reasons which make for destructiveness. It must also paralyze efforts to change anything in these conditions. If man is inherently destructive and consequently unhappy, why strive for a better future?[46]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The revisionist argument minimizes the degree to which, in Freudian theory, impulses are modifiable, subject to the "vicissitudes" of history. The Death Instinct and its derivatives are no exception. We have suggested that the energy of the Death Instinct must not necessarily "paralyze" the efforts to obtain a "better future"—on the contrary, such efforts are rather paralyzed by the systematic constraints which civilization places on the Life Instincts, and by their consequent inability to "bind" aggression effectively. The realization of a "better future" involves far more than the elimination of the bad features of the "market," of the "ruthlessness" of competition, etc.—it involves a fundamental change in the instinctual as well as cultural structure. The striving for a better future is "paralyzed" not by Freud's awareness of these implications but by their Neo-Freudian "spiritualization," which covers up the gap that separates the present from the future. Freud did indeed not believe in prospective social changes that would alter human nature sufficiently to free man from external and internal oppression. However, we tried to show that his "fatalism" was not without qualifications.

The mutilation of the instinct theory completes the reversal of Freudian theory. The inner direction of the latter was (in apparent contrast to "the therapeutic program" from Id to Ego) that from consciousness to the unconscious, from personality to childhood, from the individual to the generic processes. Theory moved from the surface to the depth, from the "finished" and conditioned person to its sources and resources. This movement was essential for Freud's *critique* of civilization: only through the "regression" behind the mystifying forms of the mature individual and his private and public existence did he discover their basic negativity in the foundations on which they rest. Moreover, only by pushing his critical regression back to the deepest biological layer could Freud elucidate the hidden content of the mystifying forms and, at the same time, the full scope of civilized repression. Identifying the energy of the Life Instincts as libido meant defining their gratification in contradiction to spiritual transcendentalism: Freud's notion of happiness and freedom is eminently critical in so far as it is materialistic: protesting against the spiritualization of want. The Neo-Freudians reverse this inner direction of Freud's theory, shifting the emphasis from the organism to the personality, from the material foundations to the ideal values. These various revisions now appear in their logical consistency: one entails the other; the whole may be summed up as follows: The "cultural orientation" encounters the societal institutions and relationships as finished products, in the form of objective entities—given rather than made facts. Their acceptance in this form demands the shift in psychological emphasis from infancy to maturity, for only at the level of developed consciousness does the cultural environment become definable as determining character and personality over and above the biological level. Conversely only the playing-down of the biological level, the mutilation of the instinct theory, makes the personality definable in terms of objective cultural values divorced from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the repressive ground which denies their realization. In order to present these values as freedom and fulfillment, they have to be expurgated from the material of which they are made, and the struggle for their realization has to be turned into a spiritual and moral struggle. The revisionists do not insist, as Freud did, on the enduring truth value of the instinctual needs which must be "broken" so that the human being can function in interpersonal relations. In abandoning this insistence, from which psychoanalytic theory drew all its critical insights, the revisionists yield to the negative features of the very Reality Principle which they so eloquently criticize.

NOTES:

1 See Edward Glover, *Freud or Jung,* W. W. Norton, New York, 1950.
2 "Uber Methode und Aufgabe einer analytischen Sozialpsychologie" (On the Method and Task of Analytical Social Psychology) in *Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung,* vol. I, 1932, p. 39 f.
3 *Ibid.,* p. 51, 47.
4 *Ibid.,* p. 53.
5 *Loc. cit.,* vol. III, 1934.
6 *Ibid.,* p. 215.
7 *Loc. cit.,* vol. IV, 1935, p. 374 f.
8 *Ibid.,* p. 395.
9 "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," in *Collected Papers,* Hogarth Press, London, 1950, Vol. II, p. 279.
10 *Civilization and Its Discontents,* London, Hogarth Press, 1949, p. 39.
11 Breuer and Freud, Studies in Hysteria, Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph no. 61, New York, 1936, p. 232. See *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* New York, Garden City Publishing Co., 1943, p. 397 f.
12 See *New Introductory Lectures,* New York, W. W. Norton, 1933, p. 206.
13 Clara Thompson, *Psychoanalysis: Evolution and Development,* Hermitage House, Inc., New York, 1951.
14 Thompson, *loc. cit.,* p. 15, 182.
15 *Ibid.,* p. 9, 13, 26 f, 155.
16 *Ibid.,* p. 42.
17 Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself,* Rinehart and Co., New York, 1947, p. 34.
18 Thompson, *loc. cit.,* p. 143.
19 Erich Fromm, *loc. cit.,* p. 50.
20 Clara Thompson, *loc. cit.,* p. 108.
21 Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry,* William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, Washington, 1947, p. 48.
22 Ernest Beaglehole, "Interpersonal Theory and Social Psychology," in *A Study in Interpersonal Relations,* ed. Patrick Mullahy, Hermitage Press, New York, 1950, p. 54.
22a Patrick Mullahy, Introduction to *A Study of Interpersonal Relations, loc. cit.,* p. XVII.
23 Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry, loc. cit.,* p. 96. See Helen Merrel Lynd's review in *The Nation,* January 15, 1949.
24 *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry,* W. W. Norton and Co., New York, 1953, p. 298.
25 See Freud's statement in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* p. 332-333.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[26] Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1950, p. 73 ff.
[27] *Ibid.,* p. 119.
[28] Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time,* W. W. Norton and Co., New York, 1937, p. 284.
[29] Clara Thompson, *loc. cit.,* p. 152.
[30] Fromm, *Man for Himself,* esp. p. 67 ff, 127 f.
[31] Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* p. 75.
[32] *Escape from Freedom,* Rinehart and Co., New York, 1941, p. 74 ff.
[33] *Man for Himself,* p. 98.
[34] *Collected Papers,* vol. IV, p. 210.
[35] *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 77, footnote.
[36] Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* p. 119.
[37] Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* p. 1.
[38] *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time,* p. 284.
[39] *Man for Himself,* p. 250.
[40] *Man for Himself,* p. VIII.
[41] *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* p. 76.
[42] Fromm, *Man for Himself,* p. 140.
[43] Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* p. 1.
[44] *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* p. 130-131.
[45] *New Ways in Psychoanalysis,* p. 130-131.
[46] *Ibid.,* p. 132.

Feel Better, Now?

"It has been brought to the committee's attention that the entire output of one such promoter [of war comic books] had been officially banned from distribution among U.S. Navy personnel because some of the contents were deemed contrary to the best interests of our country. Specifically, it was charged that their objectionable features might be the work of a genuine pacifist organization, but that they were much more likely the subversive efforts of Communists . . . One highly salutory effect has been the assurance of the publishers that all gory and pacifist features have been removed from their product."

Report of the Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials, 1952. House Report No. 2510, page 29.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMERICAN NOTEBOOK

Some Brief Comments On the Domestic Scene

I. America, the Country and the Myth

Irving Howe

One frequently hears these days that socialists cling to a stereotyped picture of American life. Failing to see the subtle and even gross changes that have taken place during the past few decades, they focus on an abstraction called "capitalism" and thereby neglect the variety, the complexity, the rich substance of American life.

Perhaps. Like everyone else, radicals are mortal, and like everyone else they suffer from the shell-shocks of modern history. But let me abandon the impersonal "they" and speak in the uncomfortable "we." Often enough we do treat such abstract—yet useful because abstract—categories as "capitalism" and "class struggle" as if they were real objects or persons rather than tools for analysis. And in doing so we may fail to notice the many changes that have taken place in the structure, as in the quality, of American life, changes that do not, I think, add up to the removal of capitalism as a functioning system or of "capitalism" as a fluid category for social analysis, but which nonetheless merit some attention and study.

The criticism would, however, be much easier for us to accept if the liberals who advance it were not themselves so susceptible to it. One of the curiosities of our intellectual life at the present moment is the thoroughness with which the dominant school of liberalism—the school for which Sidney Hook is philosopher-politician, David Riesman sociologist and Lionel Trilling literary moralist—exempts itself from its own analysis and recommendations. Few things are more dogmatic today than the anti-dogmatism of the liberal intellectual, few things more closed than his famous open mind. The image of "America" that emerges from the writings of this school is as thoroughly abstract, reified, and unhistorical as any that may be charged against the most dogmatic radicals.

In a recent tribute to David Riesman, Mr. Lionel Trilling has written that no American novel of the past period suggests to him so "brilliantly" as do Riesman's essays "the excite-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment of contemplating our life in culture as an opportunity and a danger."* This phrase about "opportunity and danger" may be taken as a summary of the numerous essays written on "America" (the idea, that is, not the country).

It is not very hard to put one's finger on the main stress of these writings. America is unique, different. Rising phoenix-like from the ashes of an exhausted world, America has achieved not merely material plenty but also an exciting, adventuresome and free-wheeling style of life. The patterns of our experience are not yet settled; things here are still open and fluid; it is as if we were living at a time when the frontier was still a reality rather than an exploited memory; as if the H-Bomb, the war economy, McCarthyism, the crack-up of Europe, the victories of Stalinism in Asia, while distressing enough, could not mar the immaculate essence of the American triumph. In the literature of liberal mythology America ceases to be a nation among nations, the major segment of international capitalist economy, and becomes instead an embodiment of the heart's desire which the brutish European intellectuals, in their malice or stupidity, insist upon maligning. All the penalties of history, all the penalties paid and yet to be paid by Europe and Asia, cannot touch us; like Joseph in his many-colored coat, America is the invulnerable and prodigal son. For America is the land that has escaped; escaped from Europe; escaped from the heartbreak house of capitalism; escaped from atomic radiation (though its heart goes out to Japanese fishermen); escaped from *anomie* and *je m'en fiche;* escaped, in short, from history.

In an essay written by Mary McCarthy a few years ago, these notions received eloquent expression. "America the Beautiful" was her title, and for once she could hardly be suspected of irony. Americans, she wrote, were the last idealists or non-materialists on earth; the nation that was soon to choose Dwight Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles as its leaders she described as a "communion of ascetics." Somewhat similarly, one sometimes feels in reading Leslie Fiedler's essays on "America" that Huck Finn, oblivious to time and man's works, is still floating down the river, Natty Bumpo is still loose on the prairie, and Ishmael is still cozying with Queequeg rather than, as I happen to know, doing his basic training at Fort Riley.

Some people may interject that it is not very profitable to take seriously the political writings of literary people; but I disagree. It is profitable. For in such writings one finds expressed, with whatever indulgence of the fancy, the assumptions that cut through almost all liberal thinking. Perhaps it is worth noting two or three of these assumptions:

1) *A refusal to analyze either the origins or prospects of our material prosperity.*

Merely to insist that everything about the past decade can be understood by a sweeping reference to "war economy" is surely to oversimplify a good deal; but to write about Ameri-

* The "excitement" of reading Mr. Riesman's current essays may be found in passages such as this one: "Our intellectuals do not . . . allow themselves to praise Hollywood movies as much as, in my opinion, they deserve; they are like psychiatrists who do not dare give a patient a clean bill of health lest some other doctor find a hidden flaw."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can life without recognizing that war production, with all of its economic and moral instabilities, *has* played a crucial role in American prosperity is to do something worse: it is to undersimplify the American scene. In Mr. Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd,* a book notable for its shrewd observations of middle class manners, no serious effort is made to relate the patterns of social life to the nature of our economy. And Mr. Riesman is far from alone in this failure. The many writers who, like him, proclaim the blessings of our material prosperity, even if they are not so rash as to invoke with him the Age of Pericles, seldom trouble to notice such limited and unexciting problems as trouble and disrupt the lives of millions of actual Americans. It is easier by far to write distinguished essays about "America."

2) *The assumption that America is a socially homogeneous nation.*

John Jay Chapman once remarked that in going to an Italian opera you might at least find out what could never be learned from reading Emerson's essays: that there are two sexes. One might say in defense of certain American sociologists that in their books, no matter how dreary, it is at least possible to learn what can seldom be discovered in the essays of the literary liberals: that there are two or more classes in America.

But surely the assumption that one can talk usefully about "America" as if it were a graspable object, or as if it were a person waiting to be psychoanalyzed, is as much a reification as the habit of discussing America simply as if it were a "model" of capitalism. And it may even be a much less useful assumption, for the Marxist categories have, at the very least, the virtue of being comparatively public and open to verification, while in the recent literary celebrations of America every man makes up his terms as he goes along, so that one must try to correlate Mr. Riesman's "other-directed community" with Miss McCarthy's "communion of ascetics."

3) *The assumption that America consists exclusively of the middle class or the academic and professional segments of the middle class.*

Seldom made explicit, this assumption pervades the work of numerous American writers, with the result that a sociologist familiar with the manners of academic life is taken to be a student of American society as a whole. The "we" that appears in the impressionistic studies of "America" comes, upon inspection, to suggest little more than a very small segment of the population. And meanwhile the millions of flesh-and-blood persons who work in factories and belong to labor unions seldom if ever appear in the works of those who talk about our changing "national character."

To be sure, it is commonly said that the American workers are thoroughly middle class in outlook, but this statement is seldom anything but the result of intellectual carelessness. In many areas of value judgment and style of life the workers of America do *approach* the middle class; but this closeness of approach can be understood only if seen as a relationship between two distinct groups. And there are also many significant areas of experience—e.g., the factory with its inner patterns of fraternity, discipline and chaos—in which the life of the workers is radically different from that of the middle class.

But few segments of the popula-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion interest the literary liberals and the impressionistic sociologists less than the workers. To feel any interest in, let alone community with, the American workers is for most intellectuals to run the worst of all risks—the risk of being thought sentimental.

AND SO WHOLE STRATA of the American population have been dismissed from the consideration of those who analyze and rhapsodize America. None of the students of "American character" thinks to look into the gradual decay of the New England textile towns or the social disruption of New York City under the pressure of Puerto Rican migration; none thinks it worth the trouble to inquire what the production crisis in Detroit means to the life of thousands of people; none so much as dreams of writing a sequel to James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,* in which we might learn what has happened to the life of the Southern sharecroppers during recent years. Under the pressures of the historical moment, the sense of social curiosity, to say nothing of the sense of social sympathy, has virtually disappeared.

For precisely this reason we must look for direct and simple reportage written by young writers who, without ideological preconceptions, will go into the cities and towns, looking, watching, responding. All that is needed—it is a very great deal—is what Edith Wharton once called "that sharpening of the moral vision which makes all human suffering so near and insistent that the other aspects of life fade into remoteness." Surely there must be a few young writers not so busy with exercises in national self-congratulation that they will tell us, as once Edmund Wilson and Sherwood Anderson and James Agee told us, what the quality of American life really is. And we hope that at least a few of these writers will care to know that nothing could please us more than to print such writings in DISSENT.

II. Big Business on the Dole . . .

The liberals, as they warm up for 1956, begin again their perennial pursuit of issues. Not much remains to them. They have muted their criticism in most areas, renounced it completely in others. Now, however, a convenient amnesia has set in which invites bold onslaughts on a condition the Democratic Party itself created.

The Fair Deal* publicists have decided to make an issue of regulatory commissions. Certain sinister developments are alleged to have taken place in the past two years. It is said that our watchdogs of fair play have been captured and leashed by the very groups they were designed to curb. President Eisenhower, determined to fulfill his campaign pledge of using

* A term designating all the unenacted legislation half-heartedly recommended to Congress by President Truman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only the best brains, sought them in their natural environment, Big Business. The best brains are not inclined to inhibit others with a similar complement of gray matter.

> Lately the welfare state has been undergoing a subtle change into the rich man's welfare state, aiding those who do not need help or who don't deserve it at public expense. The agencies created to end privilege have become bulwarks of privilege. The bureaus which were established originally as balance wheels for segments of the national economy — transportation, communications, land use, etc.—unbalance the economy by distributing the riches unevenly.

Is this Michael Straight? Marquis Childs? Stuart Chase? No. Nor is the year 1955. I am quoting from the best how-to book so far written, Blair Bolles' "How To Get Rich in Washington," 1952. Mr. Bolles wishes to characterize the *Truman* Administration, and does so with devastating thoroughness. A Fair Dealer could take the story, change its cast of characters (one Charlie Wilson for another), dedicate the whole thing to Ike, and call it a me-too book. This is probably what political scientists mean by continuity in our two-party system.

Bolles documents the process whereby nearly every important Federal agency was undermined by Executive appointment even before business came officially into its own. How the Natural Gas Act was sabotaged by Mon Walgren, Truman's crony and appointee to the Federal Power Commission. How the FCC tolerated use by professional criminals (like the bookmaker, C. J. Rish, who was grossing $5,000,000 a year) of Western Union wire service to conduct their business. How Preston T. Tucker fleeced the War Assets Administration which permitted him to occupy a $200,000,000 building free, let him use $24,000,000 worth of machine tools without charge, and spent $300,000 a year to keep up "his" plant. How "obsequious gentlemen who treated their public office as a trust for private interests" ran the U.S. Maritime Commission after World War II, assuring that "every ship of consequence" built in an American yard received a "modern spray of gold" in the form of outrageous subsidies. (Is this free enterprise? Bolles says the money is free and not much else. Guy Gabrielson became chairman of the Republican National Committee in the Truman era only after persuading the RFC to lend his firm $18,000,000—so that he could thereafter go out and plump for laissez faire.)

How, through a score of bureaus, "the policy of the 1930's of redistributing the wealth degenerated into a policy of redistributing the debts of corporations to the taxpayers." How the most notable protective agency in Washington (CAB) while lavishly subsidizing the sixteen airlines it inherited, let them run it, in accordance with the law of bureaucratic psychology which states that regulatory agencies must share the attitudes of those utilities which they are supposed to regulate in the public interest. How, through the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Federal government "became as casual about taking money" as it was "about giving it away."

But the record is writ large and one could go on ticking off innumerable acts of collusion. Unorganized taxpayers and consumers continue to suffer, but not markedly more so than in the Fair Deal days. It was not and it is not possible to ship across state lines

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bread of better quality than the packaged glue and air on which we now subsist. The Food Administration—which also allows only so many raisins in raisin bread, for otherwise it might be too nutritious—turns thumbs down on any improvement. Let 'em eat air and they will bellyache—in both senses—while the bakers have their way through the Commission that is charged with imposing high standards upon them. Bread and guns? But where is the bread?

If democratic socialists were still interested in advancing any part of their program, they would begin with the sick industries that, at present, are maintained inefficiently at astronomical expense for the benefit of a few. Since businessmen, as their own regulators, gouge all they can out of a compliant government, why not socialize and democratize the airlines, shipbuilding the coal mines, the railroads? Must we continue to hand out money to enrich men who would otherwise be bankrupt? Does this elegant dole have to continue? Is it necessary that we be distracted by absurd party squabbles at a time when some centers of real consumer and worker representation could be developed? I am sure the answer is, "Yes," but I can't help regretting it. B. R.

III. Matusow: Boomerang Boy

Travers Clement

But cruel are the times, when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumour
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way and move.

What is a traitor?
Why, one that swears and lies.
And be all traitors that do so?
Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.
And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?
Every one.
Who must hang them?
Why, the honest men.
Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men, and hang them up.

MACBETH, IV, 2.

Unless man is to drop to all fours, backbones roundabout need a bit of stiffening. In some measure, perhaps, this generally seedy book* written by a rather

* FALSE WITNESS, by Harvey Matusow. New York: Cameron & Kahn. 255 pp. Cloth $3. Paper $1.25.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seedy, no longer quite-so-young, young man may supply it. Not, let us hope, with all the results that the publishers, sponsors, and perhaps even author of the book anticipate, but we will come to that later. At the outset it is only fair to give the book its due. I know of nothing else in print which illustrates so graphically the kind of menagerie that is turned loose when society starts persecuting people for what it supposes they think rather than prosecuting them for what they do.

No argument previously advanced for repeal of the Smith Act (or the equally nefarious Humphrey "Communist Control" Act) is quite so eloquent, it seems to me, as that which emerges from Matusow's story of how the problem of linking Alexander Trachtenberg with Vishinsky's book was solved—the account beginning with that weird conference with Roy Cohn in a crowded, overheated sedan parked with the engine running on East River Drive and ending in the U.S. District Court of New York. Or, as an obscene footnote on obscene times, I give you the depressing picture of the President of Queens College mounting the stairs to Matusow's cold-water Greenwich Village flat and the subsequent lunch at the hamburger joint around the corner. "Here I was, a professional witness-informer, being sought out by the distinguished president of a college. My self-esteem climbed to new heights."

The fact that much of this book has been in the headlines and that it is written in the style and with the values behind those headlines, simply with a reverse twist, renders long sections of it stale and dull. It is this, no doubt, that gives particular vividness to some of its incidental passages. Yet there is a touch of artistry too. Together with three-quarters of the nation, I suppose, I watched Joe McCarthy for hours during the Army-McCarthy hearings, but never saw him so clearly as on this briefly described Wisconsin Walpurgis Night:

> When I arrived it was after midnight and he [McCarthy] was raking in the money in a fast game of sheepshead, a card game popular in Wisconsin.
>
> Joe had just drained his last drop of whiskey from his glass. I suggested we get some more.
>
> He said: "Well, you can put it this way—yes." With that he pulled a $20 bill out of his pocket and sent me on my way.
>
> The party broke up about 4 A.M. Whiskey and guests were gone. Joe was in his undershirt. "I'll show you my scar for a quarter," he offered, referring to the incision made during his operation. I flipped him two bits. He hoisted his undershirt and proudly displayed a scar which almost divided him in two.
>
> As I was about to say good night, Joe saw me to the door and handed me a hundred-dollar bill. "Go buy yourself a new suit, but, you son of a bitch," he swore, "if you tell anybody I gave it to you, I'll . . "

In dealing with the incidents of this book, however, whether merely of the hilarious variety or of the sort that makes men bleed, I am well aware that the reviewer opens himself to the charge of treating as fact the word of a self-confessed and consummate liar. There is no way of telling how many lies and half-truths (a term of which Matusow is particularly fond, for the reason, one suspects, that it may enable him to "beat the rap" on perjury charges) are bound up in these incidents. Even though the courts take Matusow seriously enough to grant Trachtenberg and one of his co-defendants a new trial, no jury will convict Cohn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the unsupported word of a self-confessed liar whose professed reformation may be simply the new "gimmick" to keep his name in the headlines. But the point to be made here is that whether or not these things happened as Matusow relates them, they do not strike one as being in the least incredible. Given the general climate of these times, laws which invite heresy-hunting, an eager professional witness, a zealous prosecutor on the make . . . surely this is a combination which has recurred frequently enough in history with consequences that by now should have taught us something.

The real significance of Matusow's confessions lies in the fact that as a member of the subversive Communist Party his opportunities for subversion seemed circumscribed, to say the least. He kept himself busy as a bee circulating petitions for the defense of Eugene Dennis and soliciting subs for the *Sunday Worker*. But once linked up with the FBI, the Department of Justice, the various House and Senate investigating committees, *Counterattack*, police departments, boards of education, Legion groups, and state anti-subversive bodies from New York to Texas, his chances for subversion, in the true sense of the word, seemed limited only by plane schedules. This does not add up to any value judgment. I am not suggesting that the totalitarians of the "right" are any more subversive than those of the "left." What I am trying to point up here is the present balance (or rather lack of it) between the two forces in the U.S. which makes the Government's present internal struggle against Communism so ludicrous that it is little wonder that what is referred to as the Free World hesitates to accept U.S. leadership against Communism abroad where the menace is real indeed. It is like setting fire to one's house to toast marshmallows.

WHATEVER MATUSOW'S INTENTIONS in writing the book, the circumstances surrounding its publication seem to clear up a few questions. It would be interesting to know just how heavy-handed Kahn, Cameron and Associates had to be in shaping these memoirs to their liking. It is impossible to overlook the old amalgam trick. Because Matusow lied, the implication, hammered at until the senses reel, is that every one who ever took the stand and testified on the subject did likewise. In all the justifiable attention given the Smith Act, there is not the slightest hint, of course, that the Communists, as the great patriots of that day, supported it at the time of its passage, headed the cheering section when it was used to jail the Minneapolis Trotskyists, and suggested it be used against the Socialists for opposing entry into the war. But then we shouldn't ask too much of harassed authors and publishers. They might have saved themselves the trouble, however, of trying, by such labored implication, to create the impression that there probably never was such a thing as a Communist in the U.S., that Communist infiltration of other (even exceedingly respectable) organizations was a pipe dream, that CP domination of certain labor unions was never a problem, etc. Any discerning reader will dismiss this aspect of the book for the hog-wash it is. Matusow has made it clear that he is not personally concerned with whose tool he may be at any given moment. In whatever manner he may have reformed, his peculiar bent (one might describe it as a negative sort of gen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ius) for indiscrimination and irresponsibility remains unaffected.

In one important respect, however, the early publicity surrounding Matusow and his book did him an injustice. It seized on a remark of his to the effect that as a young man he would do anything for a fast buck. In an excellent article in *The Progressive* (April 1955), Murray Kempton points out:

> But our interior motives are seldom that simple to ourselves, and Harry Matusow seems to have dreamed of glory more than money, which never seemed really important to him, unless you count the ten, twenty, and hundred-dollar bills for which he scrabbles to buy himself a new suit or get himself through the next two weeks; no man with so small a concern for debt could really care much about cash.
>
> It is not difficult to understand what drove Matusow: his every ism has been an affectation born of a morbid love of admiration and the vision of what everyone would say as he walked his garish way. Hell for him is the condition of going unnoticed.

"I wanted identity," he cries at the very opening of his book after informing us that the Bronx didn't cheer the week Matusow was born. But does he? Will he ever discover what identity is? As a friend who glanced over my copy of the book remarked, in the flashbulb-lighted world of Harvey Matusow there is no future and no past. He feels himself delivered fresh every morning like the bottle of pasteurized, homogenized milk at the doorstep. What he mistakes as identity is his name in headlines or on the cover of a book. In his dreams he is always seeking that hero's welcome ("I fully expected that hero's welcome that those who had gone before me had received: Herbert Philbrick, Elizabeth Bentley, Whittaker Chambers . . . ") which will put the name "Matusow," spelled correctly at long last, in neon lights ten stories high. He travels fast, furious and light, with no excess baggage. Perhaps here from the ranks of the anonymous mass is emerging the trigger-happy ideal man geared for survival in an atomic age.

That New Conservative Mind at Work

"I think that the error of judgment which led Wyndham Lewis to hope, in 1931, that some good might come out of Adolf Hitler's projects (an error which he quickly recognized and acknowledged the following year) was in considerable part a product of Lewis' liberal optimism and liberal individualism, impatient at the cant and the muddling of those years."—From an appreciative essay on Wyndham Lewis in the *Yale Review*, Summer 1955, by Russell Kirk, an intellectual leader of the New Conservatism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CHIMERA OF CONSERVATISM

Eugene Victor Walter

The rise of conservatism among American intellectuals has provoked ironic comment here and there but few attempts to explore its sources in the condition of society or to articulate its living function or to surmise its fate.

Despite the recent attempts of Russell Kirk, Clinton Rossiter and others to suggest some canons, neo-conservatism behaves like the Cheshire cat when one examines it for a common body of doctrines and assumptions. What is "new" and unique about the movement is not at any rate doctrinal, for the doctrines have been around for a long time, but the way a multitude of diverse elements are so easily assembled and identified as "conservative." What was formerly a chaos of trends (High and low Whiggery; laissez-faire economics as well as corporate syndicalism; all sorts of aristocratic, oligarchic, anti-democratic, xenophobic and quasi-fascist impulses) now becomes an orderly array under the arranging hand of conservatism. The unity in this farrago of notions and sentiments is simply a unity of function.

Neo-conservatism is a transitional phenomenon, modulating to rapidly changing social and political forces. Critical analysis of it is important because it reveals the direction of its movement and the forces that sustain it, but it will have little effect on the movement itself, the conservative mind being largely impervious to criticism.

Critics have been misled by the content of conservative dogmatics; it seems a waste of time to enter its soggy domain and struggle with ideas that ooze away from the bright light of criticism. Others have been misled by the faddish characteristics of the movement and the comic agility with which some frivolous minds have leaped into it. Yet, even though conservative ideas have little relevance to contemporary reality, they do correspond in function to a grave social need. In the pages that follow I propose to discuss the New Conservatism not so much in terms of its ideas—that, by now, has been done in DISSENT and elsewhere—but in terms of its significance in the American intellectual world.

II

The social function of the conservative movement, quite apart from the various subjective intentions of its intellectual defenders, is to lubricate the machinery of acquiescence. It provides a rhetoric of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assent and an organized center from which to attack radical and, when necessary, liberal independence. From some conservative quarters one hears occasional mutterings of disaffection with the welfare-corporate-garrison state: Louis Bromfield lashes out at foreign policy, immigration practices, and the growing domination of political life by the military; Russell Kirk grumbles over the ravages of industrial capitalism. Yet Bromfield is quick to be thankful for the putative wisdom of the present administration, and Kirk bows his head in piety before the awesome mysteries of Society. The rare whispers of conservative rebellion are lost amid the conservative cries of assent.

In his perceptive essay in the first issue of DISSENT, C. Wright Mills remarks upon the social irrelevancy of neo-conservatism and suggests that the position is merely tolerated by contemporary institutions. Yet I would submit, by contrast, that it is not a movement to be taken lightly. One might question Mills' judgment that "the attempt to create a conservative ideology in the United States (is) a little playful luxury a few writers will toy with for a while, rather than a serious effort to work out a coherent view of the world they live in and the demands they would make of it as political men." On the contrary, one might interpret neo-conservatism as a serious and desperate movement in the old struggle of the American mind to conceive a political self—a struggle that is now taking place in a political milieu where traditional American political theories are no longer adequate to explain political reality.

Impelled by the continuing revolution in technology, internal concentration and centralization, and the pressures of an external Enemy, American society moves willy-nilly toward a balance between pluralistic collectivism (the union of corporate concentrates bound together by military production) on the one hand and politico-military centralization on the other. As A. A. Berle has shown recently, giant economic organizations are quasi-political units. The political system is a balance of supremely coordinated power nuclei and controls administered by a coalition of managerial, bureaucratic and military élites. Political theories which can make sense of the situation and still justify it can only be *organic* views of society. Since, ironically, the libertarian tradition of American political thought has traditionally resisted organicism, the function of neo-conservatism must now be to destroy this resistance. Far from being an intellectual sport or luxury, as Mills suggests, it is a serious effort by writers who are impelled to collaborate with power in order to work out a coherent view of the new world they live in and the demands it makes of *them* as political men.

The real function of conservative rhetoric is to legitimate existing institutions, to make persons feel comfortable in the political world (that is, to make them want to do what they have to do) and symbolically to cover naked oligarchy with the vestments of aristocracy. Hieratic, it is the keeper of what Walter Lippmann calls "the signs and seals of legitimacy," and, as maker of liturgical myths, it is the consecrated defender of the "imponderable powers" of the state. It is the organiza-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of that impulse to political acquiescence which has been steadily rising in this country these past two decades; and by virtue of providing organization for the impulse it helps strengthen and dignify it. Yet it does so by providing a set of political catch-words and symbols—those which direct attention backward to an hypothetical pre-industrial conservative order—which are basically irrelevant to our liberal version of the garrison economy. Like all ideologies, its social function is not to be determined *merely* from a study or criticism of its explicit claims and formal ideas. Perhaps the central point to be made is that as the liberal garrison economy exerts pressures in behalf of acquiescence, it also creates uneasiness and tension which can momentarily be relaxed by veiling the acquiescence it demands in terms that imply and even permit a conservative criticism of its structure.

The more complex the garrison economy becomes, the more organicist will be the ideologies that justify it. The language of organicism uses biological analogies to describe social interdependence. It may easily be used in a normative rather than in a descriptive sense—that is, to justify the *enforcement* of certain kinds of solidarity rather than merely describe conditions of symbiotic interdependence. As Ernest Barker warns, organismic language conjures with metaphor, and the change from a metaphor to a myth to an idol is all too easy. Even as a metaphor, the idea of the organism "is a dangerous instrument of political thought." It creates and justifies the idea of the state or of economic institutions as inhuman super-entities with a life of their own that transcends individual human lives.

A garrison or command economy dominated by corporate concentrates and a military-bureaucratic apparatus is indeed a super-entity and must be justified by the defenders of the system. The conservatives (excluding the business-oriented conservatives) tend to couch their analogies in neo-feudal terms, borrowing from the history of medieval guilds and from Catholic social thought. Their images, drawn from a system of social interdependence based on kinship, personal fealty and emotional bonds represents a kind of solidarity that has little relevance for the present system of highly rationalized institutions based on an advanced technology and impersonal, mechanical bonds.

Today, as the corporate personality becomes a dominant nucleus of political power, its defenders feel the necessity to ascribe to it a soul and a conscience. And as the private personality becomes increasingly politicized, it is necessary to explain away the shrinkage of private living-space with arguments about "qualitative freedom" and the casuistry of "freedom *for* what." No longer does it make sense to discuss the place of the corporation in society; now the question is the place of the individual in corporate society. So that if the intellectuals are at present not ready for the absolute organicism of Maistre and Maurras, they are being gradually prepared.

Clinton Rossiter exhibits the predicament of the conservative poised ambivalently between his libertarian heritage and his need to express an organicist view. On the one hand he claims:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Society is cellular. It is not an agglomeration of lonely individuals, but a grand, complex union of functional groups. Man is a social animal whose best interests are served by cooperating with other men. Indeed, *he has no real meaning except as* contributing member of one or more . . . intrinsic groups . . . (italics mine—EVW).*

But Rossiter cannot go all the way; he warns that "the Conservative is careful not to ride the cellular analogy too hard, for he is aware that it can lead to a social theory in which man loses all dignity and personality . . . Between statism and individualism lies the middle way of ordered liberty."

Rossiter's way out is a philosophy of organic pluralism. A healthy society, he says, "will display a balanced combination of institutions," and he outlines a theory of countervailing powers, political and economic. Thus he constructs his conservative position—as "liberals" like Drucker, Galbraith and Berle construct theirs—upon the skeleton of the Whig theory of politics.

Rossiter's position clearly illustrates that the old Whiggery of nineteenth-century liberalism has metamorphosed into the new Whiggery of twentieth-century conservatism. However, where old Whiggery was generally libertarian and individualist in outlook, the new Whiggery is Burkean and Tory-tinged—conservative and more organicist. Today, both liberals and conservatives are theoretical Whigs. The doctrine has not changed much—original sin is an involution of the Whig theory of progress—but its function has.

One might argue that the present conservative-liberal coalition is a stage in the history of American Whiggery, which is a story in itself. The Whiggish dilemma and its rôle in the development of American political thought receives perceptive analysis by Louis Hartz in his recent book, *The Liberal Tradition in America.*

The elasticity of Whiggery partly accounts for the fact that there has been so much accommodation to conservative ideology and so little resistance. Graham Hough, writing in the London *Twentieth Century,* recently suggested that "the old, sleepy conservative-liberal debate . . . has in our day assumed a new sharpness, almost a theological intensity." Whatever the truth of this remark for England, in America the intensity of debate comes mainly from the tiny remnant of radicals. The American liberals are, by and large, very cordial in their relations with the new conservatives. The liberals openly admire the conservatives for their temper and restraint (qualities, as one discovers upon looking into their books, more imaginary than real), while the conservatives patronize the liberals for their eagerness to learn decorum and their alacrity to blush over the Jacobin pranks of their youth. Each is pleased with the other, and no one's feelings are hurt when Arthur Schlesinger Jr. praises Rossiter's book in extravagent terms or when, in turn, Russell Kirk magnanimously asserts that Schlesinger is really a conservative at heart. For it is true: the American conservatives can

---

* Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

add little to liberalism except a rhetoric and a temper, and the American liberals are gradually becoming more conservative. The marriage is not premature.

In contrast to conservatism, liberalism is generally associated with a philosophy of process and a concern for policies and techniques, often arguing from some form of relativism. It offers little solace to an anxiety-ridden public whirled along by dizzy technological change and trapped in the garrison economy. But conservatism works well as an ideological sedative. The conservatives offer assurance that the foundations are absolute, that the roots of society are sound, or, by another analogy, that the house is secure, despite the nibbling of Jacobin rats. Society rests on an eternal rock, guarded by providential forces—but watch out for Jacobins, Bolsheviks, leftists, pinkos or even liberals. By suggesting a conspiratorial view of social change, conservatism objectifies social anxiety, and the conservative fear of the innovator performs a social function similar to the fear of the devil in earlier periods.

III

The welfare-corporate-garrison state tends to build a system of highly organized and irrational institutions. The social function of conservative ideology is to justify these institutions, though from a distance, and to participate in the higher levels of the public relations program—the engineering of acquiescence. It thus has three main tasks:

1) To weld citizens (no longer cemented by primitive or natural bonds) to the unwieldy social apparatus by strong ideological ties. They must *adhere* at all costs; there must be what Lippmann would call "the adherence of the whole body of people to the public philosophy." Traditional libertarian political thought must therefore be replaced by organic theories.

2) To divert attention from the irrationalities and the life-denying energy of the social structure. To make the irrationalities acceptable, the conservatives promote a distrust of rational criticism. Thus Burke and other Romantics have been used to make respectable the theory that the foundations of institutions are necessarily irrational.

3) To procure strong emotional support for the social structure through the engineering of sentiments by the rhetoric of assent.

Sentiment dominates even Rossiter's writing, which is otherwise comparatively even-tempered—in contrast to the promiscuous romanticism of Kirk and the superficial preciosity of Peter Viereck. In many respects it is not possible to distinguish Rossiter's conservatism from what usually goes by the name of liberalism unless one examines its social function—what it is designed to *do*. While the liberals still tend to talk about policy, the conservatives are closer to the realization that within the framework of the welfare-corporate-garrison state, there is no alternative policy, and they are less concerned with policy than with attitudes: policy is immutable but sentiments may be changed.

Even principles are less important than feelings. Thus Rossiter writes:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Conservatism is something more than a bundle of political and social principles. It is faith, mood, sentiment, bias . . . It is the Conservative who weeps at Gettysburg or Dunkirk, the Conservative who gets goose flesh when the band plays the national anthem . . . the authentic Conservative (who is) moved almost to tears by *noblesse oblige*.

principles. It is faith, mood, sentiment, bias . . . It is the Conservative "keeps tight reign on his emotions," then heaven help us if he ever let himself go.

The rôle of sentiment and the attack upon the independent mind is less apparent in the writing of a conservative like Walter Lippmann. The world has changed in the last three decades but Lippmann has not: he still holds high his demophobia and aristocratic faith.* What is alarming today, however, is the striking similarity between his mood and that of the intellectuals of the Weimar Republic: the myths about mass behavior, despair at democracy's direction, attacks on parliamentary institutions, the call for strong and insulated executive leadership.

Lippmann's argument includes an appeal to natural law: society must be based on the "public philosophy," which he equates with the classical theory of politics, identified with natural law. Man's higher nature, he asserts, must control his primitive nature to make possible a civilized society. Furthermore, discipline and self-mastery are the qualifications for rulership in the civic state. Opposed to this classical view of politics he sets up what he calls the Jacobin gospel, which "instead of ruling the elemental impulses . . . stimulated and armed them."

He is convinced that classical natural law is the premise of civic institutions, but his defense of natural law will do that philosophy little good. He seems to be entirely unaware of the criticism the natural law position has received from the historical school, the utilitarians, David Hume, the pragmatists and a host of others. Hence he ignores its battle-scarred history and presents an archaic version of the philosophy. Those who do not know the past, Santayana said, are condemned to repeat it.

Reasoning from effects, Lippmann suggests that natural law philosophy (and he seems to mean the Thomist system of transcendental values) is the bulwark of free institutions. "These institutions," he claims, "are inseparable from the public philosophy . . . in our time the institutions built upon the foundations of the public philosophy still stand." To preserve the institutions, he asserts, the public philosophy must be taught. One can only wonder if Mr. Lippmann is aware that the country in which Thomist natural law has been taught *par excellence* on all levels of the educational system is . . . Spain. Has it protected the freedom of institutions or liberty of the Spanish people?

Lippmann's argument is equivocal in any case. There are periods when natural law has been not at all conservative but, on the contrary, a powerful revolutionary force. Natural law philosophy has often

* Walter Lippmann, *Essays in the Public Philosophy*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

served as a common program for revolutionists: it stimulated the revolutions in England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and resurged explosively in Continental thought just before the Bolshevik and Fascist revolutions.

A system of objective, transcendental values may exist, but it is not "proven" by establishing the fact that it is needed. Lippmann's public philosophy is based on a kind of negative pragmatism: accept it because bad things will happen to you if you do not. As it happens, however, this kind of faith is always poisoned in the Nessus shirt of skepticism. Lippmann recognizes that the skeptic cannot be made to conform but must be made to want to conform. To this purpose his argument is addressed.

Natural law for Lippmann is a political myth, grounded in the conviction that wishing will make it so. For years he had criticized the masses because they responded not to political reality but to pictures in their heads. Now, for the intellectuals, Lippmann has new pictures.

Mythical tendencies dominate political thought especially in times when it is not possible to do much about political reality. When polity and policy are fixed, when there seems no alternative to the welfare-corporate-garrison state except economic collapse or destruction by war, then conservative rhetoric becomes "the public philosophy."

Yet the fate of the conservative-liberal coalition is dependent on the fate of the present social structure. The more complex this military-corporate-bureaucratic apparatus becomes, the more vulnerable to shifts in sentiment it is. Sentiment is still more unpredictable than the engineers of acquiescence would like—1984 more a counsel of perfection than an immediate reality—and it is not possible to conceal all the social costs and the life denying energy of the social structure. Perhaps when these irrationalities become intense enough, the entire edifice may collapse from a sudden reversal of mood.

Meanwhile the apologists for the system will continue to react not to reality but to pictures in the head. Their plight is not new. How fresh and relevant are the words of Julien Benda, written about the situation in France thirty years ago:

> The modern writer . . . is not only in the service of a bourgeoisie which is in a state of anxiety, but . . . himself has become more and more of a bourgeois, endowed with all the social position and respect which belong to that caste. The Bohemian man of letters has practically disappeared, at least among those who engage public interest. Consequently, he has more and more come to possess the bourgeois form of soul, of which one of the most conspicuous characteristics is an affectation of the political feelings of the aristocracy—an attachment to systems of arbitrary authority, to military and priestly institutions, a scorn for societies founded upon justice, upon civic equality, a cult for the past, etc. . . .

The conservatives' talk about "reality" suggests an aphorism of Kierkegaard: What they say is as disappointing as a sign you see in a shop window that reads "Pressing Done Here." If you bring your things to be pressed, you will be fooled, for the sign is only for sale.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE LEGEND OF EDMUND BURKE

Bertram D. Sarason

In the hope of exorcising the fears of their liberal readers (perhaps the most anxious readers they have) that Conservatism is little more than a revival of crude reaction, the New Conservatives have had to give certain intellectual assurances. These are, as one might expect, gestures of reverence for civil liberties and an abhorrence of the malpractices of orthodox capitalism. Thus Mr. Peter Viereck dissociates himself from McCarthyism, and Mr. Russell Kirk, another leader of the conservative intellectuals, will have no part of laissez-faire economics. A few more qualifications of that sort and the New Conservatism will become indistinguishable from Liberalism itself. Indeed, a critical reader will be inclined to consider such professions more as apologetics than as tenets of a creed. For, certainly, this is not the Conservatism we have known in the past.

Speaking of the past, Santayana said that those who are ignorant of it are destined to repeat its errors; but he might have added, had he known the New Conservatives, that those infatuated with the past are given to glossing over its iniquities. The picture painted by Mr. Kirk in the opening chapter of *The Conservative Mind* is of a Golden Age existing before the rise of a barbarous Democracy. He summons before us a world in which there flourished, under the prevalence of Conservative principles, an awe of tradition and a cautiousness about change, which he sees as the sum of political virtue. In this Arcadia many salutary and moderate influences were supposedly at work. The Church tempered the power of the State, and pious theories of Natural Law provided a basis for secular justice. As a result, we are led to believe, property rights rarely, if ever, prevailed over human rights, while the ideals of politics guaranteed civil liberties for all. An idyllic world indeed; and without laissez faire economics or McCarthyism

But of course, no such past ever existed.

II

Let us take, as an example, the era of the French Revolution. That event was the grand pretext used by English politicians for defending vested interests and for curbing civil liberties because those liberties conflicted with property rights. The most important spokesman for property rights in that day was Edmund Burke, the hero and inspiration for the modern Conservatives. He is, says Mr. Crane Brinton, as contemporary as this morning's paper. Turn to Burke if you wish to under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stand the twentieth century, Mr. Viereck advises. And Mr. Kirk devotes the introductory chapter of his book not merely to the glorious past but to the glories of Burke. For the author of *The Conservative Mind,* Burke holds all the solutions for the evils of our time—the great prophet of the ills of Democracy, as Mr. Kirk often thinks of those evils.

But Burke, the secretly paid political advisor of the wealthy Rockinghams and Fitzwilliams, was actually a rigid defender of property rights and a leader, certainly the most outspoken leader, in an assault on freedom of speech, assembly, and publication in the turbulent 1790's. Burke supported the persecutions of the Pitt administration, which were generally directed against certain "liberals", most of them sympathetic to the French Revolution. Conservative admirers of Burke claim extenuating circumstances. They say that these "liberals" who were spied on, informed on, brought to trial, jailed, and even shipped to Botany Bay were very much like the Communists of this era. Here we have one of the formidable legends of the New Conservatives. By stressing this analogy, the Conservatives convert all French sympathizers into "Reds" —what we might call the "retrospective Red-baiting of liberals". At the same time Burke is exonerated and even apotheosized into a clairvoyant who foresaw the century of Stalinism.

Indeed, the strategy of the Conservatives, in their quest for support, is to appeal to the intellectuals by accommodating anti-Stalinism to a philosophy of tradition. Burke is made out as having saved his country, by an early warning, from one vast Jacobin plot, about the same as the Communist conspiracy; and the assaults in which he partook on civil liberties are transmuted into acts of righteousness. But this version of the Conservative tradition and of the role of Conservatism's founding father will not stand historical scrutiny.

In Burke's time the apparent target of government prosecution was a group of men who wished to extend suffrage and to repeal the Test Acts, which were unfair to those outside the Church of England. By and large, these men were not "dangerous radicals" and they have been cleared by most historians of the charge of subversion, in the good old-fashioned sense of the word. Why then were they persecuted? The question has never been satisfactorily answered.

Detailed reports of the French Revolution from the English ambassador at Paris showed that at the very outset two causes destroyed the power of the French government to maintain orderly rule. The first was the recurrent uprisings, not only in Paris, but throughout the provinces, in protest against the scarcity of grain and against the high price of bread. The second cause was the disaffection of the soldiers, many of whom, having imbibed democratic ideas from America, were unwilling to fire on their own fellow citizens when called upon to do so.

It took no Edmund Burke to warn Pitt and his administration of the possibility of similar threats to England, although the possibility of a consequent revolution was largely theoretical. Three months before the French Revolution got under way, the Lord President of the Privy Council was notified by several persons "of the riotous proceedings . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at the Coal Pits" in Northumberland. Two weeks after Bastille Day the Home Office—the then equivalent of the FBI—was investigating an anonymous letter received by the Lord Mayor of London which threatened to burn down the Albion Mills unless the price of bread was reduced. The day before, the High Sheriff of the County of Denbigh and Justices of the Peace of Wrexham warned the Home Office of "repeated and alarming disturbances among the Colliers and others occasioned by the advanced price of Corn." It was added earnestly, that "their views do not seem to be confined to the pretended object," and the government was urged to send down an investigator as well as troops. On August 4 a reply was forthcoming to the effect that a local investigator might be more effective and that the troops stationed at Wrexham seemed sufficient for the present needs. But on August 20, in response to a letter from one of the local Magistrates, three troops of dragoons were sent for reinforcement.

At this very time an owner of the Albion Mills was inviting the attention of the Home Office to additional dangers. Public prints, such as *The World,* were circulating "most dangerous and inflammatory" matter—e.g., a paragraph entitled "Bread for Extortion." More serious was proof he offered from James Beech of the Coldstream Guards that "100 men of his Regiment were determined not to fire upon any mob that might attack the Albion Mills—That he had heard them say so—That there were upwards of 11,000 sacks of Flour at the Mills at a time when people were wanting Bread."

The government was on the alert hereafter to quell strikes by force and to scotch disaffection in the army. True, the height of vigilance was not reached until the Birmingham Riots of July 1791, because they were a prelude for strikes throughout England for the next two years. But even before July 1791, Tom Paine was being spied on, inasmuch as his book was being read by the poorer classes, and Colonel De Lancey was sent on a special mission to determine the spread of Paine's ideas—and those of other reformers—among the troops. As a result of De Lancey's investigations, troops were removed from many sensitive spots, and new barracks were built at a distance from so-called corrupted cities.

A member of the nobility, writing to the Home Office on November 7, 1792, summed up the fears of the administration in his own report on conditions in North Wales: "The Miners are about 2,000 in number . . . & being a loose body of Men will be the objects of the addresses of Mr. Paine's disciples." Every strike was confronted with a detachment of troops, and all efforts at increasing wages or at lowering prices were denominated "Seditious Proceedings." The advocates for Parliamentary Reform and for the repeal of the Test Acts were regarded as inciting the working classes, and the crime of such reformers was not their specific acts but the suggestiveness of their language—not what they did but their possible influence. The French Revolution itself was looked upon in a similar light. According to the daughter of a government spy, certain miners had united "under the pretension . . . of the dearness of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Corn & that they must have their Wages raised . . . they are instigated by ill-disposed people & there are even some among them that utter something about the *French* & others doing the *same.*" Behind the anxiety about the French Revolution and about the reformers, whose program was, after all, quite moderate, there was a fear that the demands of the people might inconvenience the propertied classes.

III

Edmund Burke played an important role in mobilizing public opinion for the witch hunts that were deemed necessary; the Pitt administration found him extremely useful. Almost immediately after the publication of his *Reflections* on November 1, 1789, we find him on friendly terms with his former bitterest enemies, with Dundas, Pitt's right hand, and with George III. Burke's functions, as the administration saw them, were to stir up public opinion for so-called "security measures" and to divert the attention of critics from the administration to Burke himself—a function which McCarthy performed admirably for a while. Burke was willing to cooperate; in fact, he was permitted to believe that he was leading the administration in the entire project. When Burke produced the famous dagger of Dr. Maxwell—one of thousands being manufactured for the French, he told the House of Commons—he made it appear that the dagger was his discovery. It had been given to him by one of Pitt's secretaries precisely for the purpose of putting Burke in the forefront while, behind the scenes, the government was conducting a general investigation of munitions orders and was tracking down rumors that Irish agents were supplying the French with arms.

Of course there was no foundation to Burke's charges that the administration was lax. As a matter of policy, the government had to conceal its activities, the litigations being drawn up, and the vast network of spies and informers surreptitiously at work. Even if Burke received a good deal more credit—or blame—than he actually deserved, his complicity cannot be denied. In the mind of the public he was the arch reactionary of the day, as Pitt must have hoped he would become. Reform societies thanked Burke for the discussion he provoked and especially for his occasioning Paine's great reply. Other testimony is to be found in the literature of the period which exploited Burke's nasty remark in the *Reflections* about the "swinish multitude". Pamphlets like *A Salmagundy for Swine* or *Hog's Wash* were common during the 1790's. They serve to remind us of history in all its harsh reality, a narrative telling of encroachments on freedom and cruelties to the poor.

So much for the civil liberties aspect of the Conservative past. It is now appropriate to see just how far the "communion of Church and State" effected a tempering of power and just how far the old doctrines of Natural Law prevented property rights from superseding human rights: to examine, in other words, just how much truth there is—if we appeal to experience, as the New Conservatives say we should—in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their own favorite doctrines. Students of Marx and Tawney need no elaborate investigation to demonstrate the role played by the ecclesiasts in rationalizing the interests of the propertied classes. For that matter, we need go no farther than the founder of modern Conservatism, Edmund Burke himself, to show that the historic role of conservatism has been to defend vested interests.

In 1795, when the era of shortages and high prices finally resulted in a deep depression, proposals were made for Pitt's government to undertake some program of aid to the agrarian workers. One idea was to establish an official granary, another plan to increase wages. At any rate, the proposed projects called for the prevention of runaway prices and for augmented purchasing power. The class whose pocketbook would be affected would be that of the wealthy landowners, the Fitzwilliams and others whom Burke served. It was under these circumstances that Burke wrote his fragmentary essay, *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity,* in the hope of dissuading Pitt from coming to the aid of the distressed. It is an essay which would have warmed the heart of Herbert Hoover, an essay dramatically described by Mr. Kirk as the most "lucid retort" of the defenders of free enterprise, but in no way denounced by him as embodying the very laissez faire economics he supposedly abominates.

Burke's *Thoughts and Details* is pertinent here because it illustrates the perverse uses to which an appeal to Natural Law can be put. It illustrates too that political theory can be shot through and through with religion—as modern Conservatism is indeed pietistic—without precluding the grossest kind of inhumanity. Burke, conceding that the plight of the poor deserved attention, also contended that the employers had rights that ought not be overlooked. The strategem towards which he worked was to represent the situation as one in which equal and conflicting claims subsisted. To help the poor meant to rob the rich; to leave the rich without obligation for the poor was to work the injustice the other way. Then, employing a device of the theologian Suarez, Burke said that the question could not be resolved by justice: the problem was one known as appealing to "the order of charity."

In other words, government, the agency of justice, was not to intervene; and the decision to help the poor was to be left entirely to the employers whose rapacity was the crux of the problem from the beginning. To clinch his argument, Burke maintained, in the facile rhetoric historically characteristic of the Conservative, that the laws of Commerce were the laws of Nature, that the laws of Nature were the laws of God, and that by so much as disturbing the everyday flow of business an iota, one ran counter to the Divine Will. It was by such arguments that property rights were given preference to human rights.

The annals of an era are summarized in the records of the city of Lincoln. On December 17, 1792: a sum not exceeding 20 pounds for checking the spirit of the disaffected. On June 5, 1794: 300 pounds for the internal defense of the kingdom. On December 12, 1793: over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

100 pounds for the purchase of a new organ for St. Peter's Church. On December 22, 1794—it being just before Christmas: "Fourty guineas for the poor during the present inclemency of the season."

The real past, then, not the past of the Conservative Imagination, was one in which the essential principle of humaneness was flouted. Consequently, when the Conservatives call for a return to tradition, they mean one of their own devising, a past which has been carefully purged of all embarrassing actuality. The Conservative, looking fondly back to the age of Burke, is never likely to uncover this kind of vignette, part of a contemporary report about the life of children of both sexes, some of them no more than five years old. They worked in mines, the witness said, where they were "chained, belted, harnessed like dogs in a go-cart, black, saturated with wet, and more than half naked—crawling upon their hands and feet, and dragging their heavy loads behind them." And if these evils have been abolished in most countries today, it is not owing to "the order of charity" or to Natural Law or to any Conservative concept as such but rather to the passion for justice made explicit by the French Revolution and summarized in the idea of the Rights of Man. These were the principles that gave impetus to the spread of civil liberties and that elevated human rights above property rights. But this is the very tradition which the New Conservatives reject.

IV

Burke himself, very much like the New Conservatives, often insisted that he was fundamentally liberal, that his attack on the French Revolution, as well as his refusal to support the reforms under consideration in the 1790's, was justified by the needs of the times. He thought the ship of state was being overburdened on the Left, for which reason, as he said in the final lines of the *Reflections,* he wished to preserve equipoise by adding the weight of his arguments to the other side. But it was not until January 1790, by which time the French Revolution was six months old and its course, at least its abolition of the *ancien régime,* was clearly defined, that Burke first focused his fears upon specific persons at home. Prior to then, in September and October 1789, Burke was eager to gain the voting power of the "reformers," and he wrote, once to Fox and once indirectly to the Prince of Wales, urging them to accommodate a request of Dr. Priestley. Along with Dr. Price and Tom Paine, Priestley enjoyed a position of eminence among the dangerous "radicals" whom Burke shortly thereafter condemned.

It was only when Burke learned that Dr. Priestley's friends would not support his party in the forthcoming elections—he found this out one evening in early January 1790—that he broke with the "reformers" and made the attack on the French Revolution, to which they were sympathetic, the mission of his existence. Rationalizing his chagrin as a "threat from the Left," Burke joined forces with others whose equanimity was being shaken, with the High Churchmen who had disturbing visions of lost tithes, with those close to the Court who believed all monarchy in danger, and with the propertied classes whose status was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

threatened by the concurrence of strikes and the influx of democratic ideas. Burke's was no lonely position when he became, to use Matthew Arnold's words, the spokesman for an epoch of concentration.

To say, as has been said, that Burke proved useful to government and to those uneasy classes who looked to government for protection in somewhat the same way as McCarthy served a vicarious purpose, is not to suggest for a moment that we are speaking of men of comparable culture or depth. Their very marked differences may make it distasteful to us, and even repugnant for the mind to conceive, that there were, after all, some striking traits in common between the two: though dragged to such conclusions we cannot embrace them. It is not unlikely, however, that both men had their interested motives and were blind, in turn, to the existence of those motives.

Burke, of course, was a man of great abilities, and he was, in his way, a genius—or rather, he had a genius for expression. Conservatism did not originate with Burke—it was already a commonplace in his day—and those classes whose ideological property it was needed no rhapsodic rendering, such as Burke gave it, to make that "philosophy" acceptable to them, especially during the 1790's. To trace the genesis of Conservatism in historical context and in Burke's career does not necessarily impugn the doctrine itself, although a retrospective view will help us see Conservatism in a less mysterious and sanctified light than some people are willing to see it.

Mr. Crane Brinton tells us that the quarrel between Burke and Paine is now over, and Burke is the decided victor. This is a decision with which few of us will agree. It will serve, however, to point the direction in which the sympathies of the New Conservatives lie. It will remind us, if a reminder were needed, that the historic role of Conservativism, no matter what its intellectual adornments, has been to defend the *status quo* by rationalizing its injustice, by creating a false atmosphere of hysteria, and by using an illusory past to distract attention from the evils of the present.

SOURCES. For conditions in England during the 1790's the records of the Home Office (from HO42.13 onwards) in the Public Records Office, London were a valuable source. The reports of the Duke of Dorset derived from the Foreign Office reports (from FO 27.30 onwards) also on deposit in the Public Records Office. The quotation on child labor is taken from J. L. and Barbara Hammond's *The Town Labourer,* 1760-1832; it was called to my attention in a review of that book in the *Times Literary Supplement,* August 8, 1953. Data on the city of Lincoln comes from the *Historical Manuscripts Commission,* Lincoln Mss., XIV Report, Appendix VIII, p. 119. Materials on Burke were drawn from the standard *Correspondence,* 4 Vols. (London, 1844), from the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, from the Northampton Records Office, Lamport, England, and from the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments on deposit at the Central Library, Sheffield, England. The kindness of Sir Owen Morshead made it possible for me to see certain papers among the Royal Archives, and the generosity of Earl Fitzwilliam to use unpublished Burke materials at Lamport and Sheffield, where I also received necessary permissions and kind assistance from the librarians at those places. Much of the research incorporated in this essay was done in connection with a grant during 1954-1955 from the Fund for the Advancement of Education.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ever since the Labor Party came to power in England a decade ago, its achievements and shortcomings have been a subject of first importance for socialists, as indeed for everyone else interested in politics. Several articles in DISSENT—one by Stanley Plastrik in the first issue and another by G. D. H. Cole in the fourth issue—have tried to assess the Labor Party's record. Nor does this need decrease because of the results of the recent British election. As part of this discussion, there follows an article in which a point of view considerably different from those of Plastrik and Cole is presented.—The Editors

BRITISH LABOR'S SELF-EXAMINATION

William J. Newman

The high hopes many people held for the British Labor Party after 1945 have, to some extent, been replaced by disillusionment. But the present difficulties of the Party are not to be explained by electoral defeat or the sound and fury of the Bevanite quarrel. These are superficial manifestations of a larger concern—the facts of mid-twentieth century society and their meaning for socialism. The last twenty-five years have brought changes in British social and political life which throw considerable doubt on the traditional beliefs and assumptions of British socialists and socialists everywhere. It is discussion about these facts, and not whether Britain should build the hydrogen bomb or nationalize the Imperial Chemical Company, which has caused the party publicly to harrow itself with argument about "The Nature of Socialism" (one would have thought that had been discovered by now) and "The Next Step in Socialism," etc., etc.

The despair with which G. D. H. Cole (in "Is This Socialism?") and Stanley Plastrik (in "British Labor in Retrospect") have presented their own brand of disillusionment in DISSENT is, therefore, more interesting as an indication of the tenderness of socialists for their past opinions than as a guide to the needs of the movement. It is easy to toss the Labor Party aside as a tired failure or an agency of right-wing trade union leaders. But the Labor Party is more than an object of pity or a subject of disappointment; its situation raises the issues which face Western socialism today—as distinct from the late 19th century.

Britain today presents no likeness to the highly stratified and immobile society of the nineteenth century. Social mobility has changed the character and meaning of the British class structure, and, as D. V. Glass has shown in *Social Mobility in Britain,* the open society is a concrete and very palpable thing in Britain. Movement upward and downward on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social scale is much more free and easy than had been realized; Britain, it seems, is the most fluid society in the world—save the United States. This being so, the Labor Party has had to reckon with this society and has had to rethink the meaning of its ideal of a classless and equalitarian society. For the belief in the efficacy of a classless society rested on the assumption that social mobility under capitalism was impossible.

Is, then, the classless society still necessary and desirable? G. D. H. Cole thinks so. He can only view the concepts of social mobility and the open society with disdain and as a threat to the classless society. He is correct. But he unwittingly shows their attractiveness when he notes that mechanization is increasing production without the need for the "higher effort" on the part of the workers which, it was once thought, a classless society would demand. But if the "higher effort" is more than slightly irrelevant, does that mean that one must adopt a vulgar middle-class tone and smugly worship the social riser? The Labor Party is faced with the fact of social mobility in Britain, but what it means to socialism depends on what use it makes of it. There is a radical use and a conservative use.

This brings us to Cole's concept of workers' control of industry, something which no one can doubt is fundamental to any serious interpretation of socialism. There is no reason why the equal opportunities implied in free social movement should be restricted to the middle class, as now they usually are. There is every reason why, say, education should give to a worker not so much the ability to move into the middle class, as the power to take a real part in worker-management. G. L. Arnold, an English writer, has recently pointed to the existence of a new class of technical workers and the rise of a new "industrial democracy" which is based on "technical competence." He also points out that technical education without responsibility is socially irresponsible. It is at this point that the fact of social mobility may serve the interests of the worker. Encouragement of worker mobility in the sense of opening up to him the chance of management on practical levels can be a partial means of achieving the hitherto nebulous goal of workers' control. Education plus the opportunity to perform an important function in industry can make it possible for workers to move upward in the field of control in accordance with their ability; worker mobility will be a partial realization, at least, of the slogan "from each according to his means." For social mobility can mean more than increasing one's wealth; it can also mean increasing one's usefulness and capacities. It is *planned* social mobility, not the *laissez-faire* form in which the middle class takes most, which can give the workers their rights by giving them the tools to rise above the level of the shophand.*

That would be the radical use. But the conservative wing of the Labor Party finds it easier—conservatism is always easier: that is why it is con-

* To some extent—but to a small extent—this has been the effect of welfare measures in Britain. To a greater extent, it has been the unwitting effect of the technological changes which have taken place in the United States since the end of the war. But so far in Britain social mobility has meant nothing more stimulating than moving from a Council house to a suburban villa.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

servatism—to let things go on as they are, since the *laissez-faire* form of social mobility releases the pressure of the lower classes for change. Such men as Gaitskill and Attlee are willing, therefore, to tolerate the class structure as it now exists. In the nineteenth century this structure was anathema; equality meant the classless society since social mobility was not even a dream, and the only way to break down the class barriers reflecting economic and social subordination was to wipe out the exploiters by wiping out their class. The logic of the nineteenth century in this as in other respects is clear. Today self-respect and economic needs can be satisfied in other ways. Rowntree and Lavers pointed out in 1951, that primary poverty was virtually abolished in Britain, and secondary poverty almost so.* The worker has his problems to be sure, but they are to a great extent problems of his nation rather than his class.

So what meaning does the classless society have today for the Britisher? Perhaps very little. But what the conservative wing of the Labor Party has forgotten is that equality is still a necessary component of the socialist society. Social mobility, if it is planned to its logical end, can achieve not a classless society, but a very real form of social democracy. The logical end of social mobility is equality of opportunity. It is not an interpretation of equality to be sneered at—especially when it is something that is being realized, or at least can or may be realized.

If social mobility as a form of equality is a concept which has not been clearly formulated by either side within the Party, it is being discovered that the specific meaning of the word equality may vary from one epoch to another. A "Labour Policy-Maker" states in the *Manchester Guardian* (January 11, 1955) that:

> . . . . . An advance towards greater social equality is likely to become more and more the conscious objective of Socialist planning in the coming years. The theme is not new but the emphasis it represents was neglected in the post-war period when the party was mainly concerned with major legislation.

But he also points out that:

> . . . . . the answer to Labour's dilemma will not be found in a comprehensive doctrine but in a simple restatement of some of Labour's traditional faith adapted to, and worked out in terms of, British society in the nineteen-fifties.

Barbara Wootton has re-opened the whole question of equality in her new book *The Social Foundations of Wage Policy*. She weighs down on the inequality—the irrationality, in fact—of wages in Britain, and claims that wage differentials represent the social attitudes of social classes, not the facts of supply and demand. In making her point that more equalitarianism is needed to make a rational distribution of income in proportion to ability, she indicates how little the Labor Party has done in this direction. But again, the question is raised as to what equalitarianism means. Robin Marris, discussing her book as an economist, in *The Twentieth Century* (May, 1955), points out that direct action against social attitudes is not

* Rowntree and Lavers, *Poverty and the Welfare State* (1951). A. M. Cartter has pointed out in *The Redistribution of Income in Postwar Britain* (1955) that the "necessary prerequisite for the diminishing of inequality of opportunity" now exists for the first time in Britain because of the ending of poverty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enough to meet the very real problem of supply and demand which does exist. He claims that "The main effort must be devoted to more equalization of opportunity on the 'supply' side."

THE SIGHT OF THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY wrestling with its socialistic soul is an encouraging one, but it is a controversy not confined to ideological content. If social mobility and the acceptance of the welfare state have posed a pretty problem as to the significance of the classless society today, it has also posed a problem of tactics. Cole, along with other zealots who have nothing to lose but their M.P., may want to wander in purity and faith in the electoral wilderness while they find the grail, but others in his party suspect the wandering may be of longer duration than is good for either the party or socialism. Mark Arnold-Foster in the *Manchester Guardian* recently posed the electoral dilemma of the Party, when he pointed out that the "masses" are bored with Labor's high ideals and see no need of them. This is a problem which Hyndman and his SDF met and failed to solve in much more propitious days, and the Fabians met and solved in their own peculiar way. Today the context is different. There are no groaning and toiling masses—only the old age pensioners, the trade unions, and the middle classes.

The problem is complicated by the discovery in John Bonham's new book, the *Middle Class Vote,* that the workers are not always faithful to the Labor candidate, to put it mildly. He shows that half the votes of the Conservative Party in 1951 came from the manual workers, and that after 1945, both the workers and the middle class swung in equal proportions to the Conservative Party.* The facts which Mr. Bonham presents in his book are disturbing for those who believe, or would like to believe, that the Labor Party gains the automatic support of the English workers. This is not to say that the Labor Party is not predominantly supported by the working class; in the postwar period only one in five Labor votes came from the middle class, and in theory if Labor got all the workers' votes, it could, of course, win any election. But it does not, and never has, and those middle class votes are accordingly Very Important Votes.

> The distribution of Party choices in Great Britain does not conform to the pattern of a class struggle. First, we have the very large dependence of the Conservative Party on wage-class votes. Secondly, we have . . . . . the rise and fall of party votes . . . . . at every level of social class and income. The split is not horizontal, but oblique.**

In short, British politics are to a great extent independent of class. This means that Labor may be forever-and-a-day dependent on the shifting vote, and not, as Cole casually suggests, for one or two elections alone while the workers get back their scattered senses. Mr. Plastrik has said in his article "Labor in Retrospect,"

	Millions of adults
*1945 middle class vote for the Conservatives	4.8
1945 working class vote for the Conservatives	4.4
1950 middle class vote for the Conservatives	5.8
1950 working class vote for the Conservatives	5.8
1951 middle class vote for the Conservatives	6.5
1951 working class vote for the Conservatives	6.2

John Bonham, *The Middle Class Vote* (1954) p. 168.

** *Ibid.,* p. 179.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the election of 1945 "constituted an elementary and embryonic (*sic*) conquest of political power by the working class." In the light of these facts, his remark sounds rather Victorian.

The electorial problem which faces the Labor Party today is posed by these statistics, but—as usual with statistics—is not solved by them. The Labor Party is a worker's party, yet is something more. Class issues do play a role in British politics—but so do other issues. The dilemmas of this situation could be avoided in the years 1945 - 1950, when the nation agreed that a modicum of socialism would do it no harm. Now that a virtual electoral stalemate has been reached, the pressure exerted on the party to make a choice of its political character has become more intense. The electoral facts of life (and the running down of Labor's program and its zest) are forcing the Labor Party to become a national party. Does this mean that it will simply become an alternative opposition party—of good will perhaps, but a party essentially playing the role which the Liberal Party played up to 1914? Or will it retain its virtue and—like most virtuous things—become more ingrown and less attractive? The problem is simple and devastating; is there a basic incompatibility between the role of a national party and a socialist party? It is a question which the socialists have never had to answer before, because they have never before had a party of the stature of the British Labour Party.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS for the British Labor Party of modern social and political facts. Modern research often uncovers things better left covered (and sometimes it uncovers the obvious with a great flourish of learning), but there it is and it must be faced. However, since research does not have a political point-of-view, it destroys old suppositions without putting anything in their place. The fact that British society is fluid and contains great possibilities of equality of opportunity, and that the British Labor Party is not solely a working-class party, may grate on some traditional beliefs of some socialists. Such conclusions, however, need not cause these beliefs to be overthrown; they need only involve some new ideas as to what they mean.

Followed by a Left to the Jaw?

"I am ordering 50 copies to be sent to 50 universities with my card". — Gene Tunney (Part of advertising blurb for Max Eastman's book, *Reflections on the Failure of Socialism,* published in the *New Leader*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An Exchange on the ADA Convention

David C. Williams
Director of Research & Education, Americans for Democratic Action

We read with interest Mr. Irving Howe's article, "ADA: Vision and Myopia" in your spring issue. We believe that the standard for judgment of ADA which he sets forth, in refraining from "berating liberals for not being socialists," is a just one. With some of his opinions on issues and personalities we do not agree, but he is as entitled to his opinions as we are to ours. We do, however, ask the hospitality of your columns to present corrections or clarifications on some matters of fact:

1) When the ADA Convention on March 19 amended the sentence in its platform, "We oppose limiting the right to advocate unpopular proposals, including Communist ideas," by striking out the last three words, it did not retract ADA's opposition to limiting the right to advocate Communist ideas, although the action was widely so interpreted by the press. It was precisely to dispel this confusion that, in his acceptance speech as our newly elected Chairman, Mr. Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., the next day specifically stated that Communist ideas—as well as fascist, Trotskyist, and other such ideas—are included in the category "unpopular political proposals," and that ADA in the future, as in the past, will oppose all efforts to limit their advocacy.

2) The convention delegates listened with respect to Mr. Telford Taylor's arguments in support of wire-tapping, although they had earlier the same day declared: "We oppose as an intolerable violation of civil liberties the use of wire-tapping, whether practiced by the Federal Government, by the states, or by individuals." This is the majority view, but there are many members of ADA who, like Mr. Taylor, differ with it. Liberals will never be in full agreement on all questions, and we have not, nor would we wish to have, any system of "democratic centralism" to enforce conformity.

3) ADA's concern for civil liberties did not begin with the Eisenhower Administration; on the contrary, this field received as much attention in ADA conventions during the Truman Administration as now. Our new chairman, Mr. Rauh, has as an attorney fought civil liberties cases under both Administrations, and he has publicly and explicitly stated on many occasions that Government violations of civil liberties long antedate January 20, 1953.

4) ADA states in its platform that "the aggressive, imperialist policies of the Soviet bloc, led by the Soviet Union and Red China, are the over-riding threat to world peace today," and in this basic assumption it agrees with both the Truman and the Eisenhower Administrations. But it has on occasion criticized vigorously the measures both Administrations have taken to meet this threat.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Some other matters which Mr. Howe discusses are dealt with implicitly in the platform: for example, advocating a UN trusteeship and plebiscite for Formosa is very different from "the whole US policy of supporting Chiang Kai-shek." Others have been discussed at previous ADA conventions, and an examination of our whole record would reduce considerably the number of the omissions of which Mr Howe complains. I close by agreeing that political realism must always be a factor which ADA has to recognize, but that, in my experience, it plays a considerably smaller role in the formulation of policy than Mr. Howe suggests.

Irving Howe replies:

I am grateful to Mr. Williams for submitting his corrections, though in all good faith I do not really see that they correct very much.

1) When the ADA convention voted to omit the last three words from the statement, "We oppose limiting the right to advocate unpopular ideas, including Communist ideas," it was at the very least watering down or making ambiguous the first part of the sentence. Which other unpopular ideas (except those that are, sometimes mistakenly, assumed to be close to Communist ideas) are today significantly at stake in the U.S.? Mr. Rauh's statement, and Mr. Williams' citation of it, are very welcome; but what are we to make of the ADA conventon action—what do *they* make of it—in eliminating the phrase "including Communist ideas" which had alone given point and edge to the statement? I took this action to be an equivocation on the part of the ADA.

2) Mr. Williams has failed, I think, to grasp my point about Telford Taylor's defense of wire-tapping. Surely nothing I wrote could be construed as questioning in any way Mr. Taylor's *right* to say what he did. (As for "democratic centralism," that, in the present context, is somewhat of a red herring, and not from my barrel either.) My point was rather to illustrate what I called the "collective amnesia" of the ADA: that is, its failure squarely to trace most of what it finds objectionable in the Eisenhower handling of the "security" problem to its real source, the Truman administration. And also, for that matter, its failure to bring to bear on such of its heroes as Francis Biddle, whom Mr. Taylor invoked as his authority *in behalf* of wire-tapping, a fraction of the critical wrath it pours on the Republican leaders.

3 and 4) I know that the ADA has made critical remarks about both the domestic and foreign policies of the Truman administration. My point was that it has failed to engage in an *analysis* of the continuity, and the reasons for that continuity, from the Democratic to the Republican administrations. (To forestall misunderstanding, let me say that continuity doesn't mean equivalence.) To engage in such an analysis, I submit, might force the ADA to qualify in the most serious fashion its devotion to the memories of the New and Fair Deal.

Thus, it is true that the ADA proposal for a plebsicite for Formosa (which I praised, incidentally) is different from the U.S. policy of supporting Chiang Kai-shek. But the point I made was that the ADA failed to "relate the present debacle to the whole U.S. policy of supporting Chiang Kai-shek, even if such an inquiry did involve the embarrassment of having to question the foreign policies of both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am sorry that Mr. Williams has confined himself to raising these specific but not finally crucial points. It might have been more fruitful if he had taken up some of the general characterizations I made of the ADA. I wish, too, that he had permitted himself to say something about what I described as the failure of the ADA people to go beyond "political items" in order "to ask themselves any fundamental questions rgarding their political identity." I don't mind very much Mr. Williams' failure to say anything about my friend Reb Zusya, but I do wish he had said a word about his friend Senator Humphrey.

COMMUNICATIONS (2)

A Socialist Organization in the U. S. Today?—Yes!

Gordon Haskell

In his article "Sects and Sectarians" which appeared in the Autumn 1954 issue of DISSENT, Lewis Coser calls for the dissolution of all existing socialist organizations in America.

The following is an answer as much to DISSENT's claim to represent a superior substitute for a socialist organization in America today as it is directed against Coser's particular treatment of the subject.

As a member of the Independent Socialist League, I naturally believe that my organization is superior to the others in the field not only in its politics but in the other aspects of socialist organization discussed. Since neither Coser nor the editors of DISSENT have chosen to deal with any particular socialist organization in specific terms, my defense has been general too.

●

Should the socialist movement continue to exist in organized form in America? That is the question raised by Lewis Coser in the last two pages of his article in the Autumn 1954 issue of DISSENT. He answers the question with the denunciation of all existing socialist organization, and a call for their dissolution.

This is not the first time that the cry has been raised for the liquidation of what is left of the socialist movement in this country. On the right the cry is rising to an unprecedented crescendo, and is accompanied by very concrete governmental action designed to wipe out organized socialism in this capitalist fortress. An index of our times is that this cry for liquidation is also raised from a section of the "left," and has become a standard theme among the ex-socialists who would rather have no living organism to remind them, and more important, their employers and the authorities, of their past. And now we also hear it from people who call themselves socialists, but who have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come to the conclusion, in the midst of the witch hunt, that the socialist movement in America is really finished for the present, and that its members would do everyone concerned a favor if they would disband and disappear into the somewhat larger body of "radicals."

Of course, the motives which animate these would-be liquidators of socialist organization in America are dissimilar, and only a dabbler in sociological typology or a scoundrel might try to make them appear identical.

The reactionaries want to destroy socialist organizations because they fear them. However feeble such organizations may be at present, however isolated, the reactionaries have a healthy respect for their potential ability to arouse and help organize the masses. The less sophisticated or the more demagogic believe, or claim to believe, that revolutions are made by tiny handfuls of dedicated people who band together in a conspiracy to "foment" and "infiltrate" their way to power.

The more sophisticated reactionaries recognize that the socialist movement in this country is in a very weakened state today. But they also recognize that capitalism is still crisis-ridden, and feel that the bearers of the historical tradition of socialism should be eliminated now, while weak, so that they will not have to be dealt with under what may well be less auspicious circumstances (for capitalism) in the future.

The ex-socialists and those present socialists who call for an end to socialist organization do so for the opposite reason. They want the socialist organizations to dissolve not because they fear their strength, but because they are convinced that these groups are doomed to helplessness. To put it more accurately, because they have lost their former confidence not so much in this or that specific socialist grouping, but in the possibility of any socialist program or socialist analysis making headway against the non-socialist stream of American social and political thought and action. (Hence the never-ceasing and never-answered cry in these circles for "reevaluation," a "fresh approach," etc.)

Lewis Coser's article on "Sects and Sectarians" is the most recent attack on the organized socialist groups in America to come from the radical side. Although I will not attempt a detailed analysis of this article, it deserves to have a few things said about it.

The most striking thing about the article is the disjunction between the bulk of it and its concluding two pages. Most of it is a rambling discussion of certain aspects of organized social behaviour. The traits Coser discusses are, apparently, equally to be observed in religious and political groupings ranging from vast institutions like the Catholic church to Lenin's underground party in Czarist Russia, to the small socialist organizations in America today. Examples are taken from everywhere, apparently at random. It seems almost a matter of chance that just about every socialist organization in existence in this country is referred to (not really discussed), if only by the device of quoting some sentence from the writings of one of its leaders.

But suddenly the article turns from the general, the "typological" which applies to no one group in particular (as the author tells us), but at the same time to all by implication, and gets more or less specific. All radical sects are today an obstacle to the development of a socialist movement in America. Away with them. In their place, let us have the "new generation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of radicals who, like those who built the Debsian Socialist Party, go out into the world of their fellowmen and inquire after their needs, desires, wishes, not men who in their cloistered virtue know the correct prescriptions."

(We are interested in this historical discovery of how Debs and his comrades built their movement. We await with curiosity Coser's evidence, for it has eluded all previous historians of the American socialist movement.)

But this assertion about the Debsians, which only aroused our curiosity, is followed by a quotation which actually defies belief. It is a quotation from Marx which, apparently, has been found to be one of the live parts of the socialist tradition. It stands at the end of Coser's proclamation of anathema against all existing socialist sects with no further explanation than that he knows of no better way to end his article. It reads as follows:

"The development of socialist sects and the development of a genuine labor movement have at all times been in inverse ratio. If sects exist with a measure of historical justification for their existence, it but indicates that the working class has not yet ripened for an independent historic movement. But when the working class reaches maturity, all sects become a reactionary phenomenon."

That is a very fine quotation, and it should be read every day by those devoted but misguided socialist sectarians who continue to maintain their closed, purist sects in countries like Britain and France and Germany where the working class has long since formed its own socialist political organizations.

But what shall we begin with it here in America, as the Germans say? Has the American working class "ripened for an independent historic movement?" Has it reached even the kind of political "maturity" which we find in social democratic movements of Europe and Asia, where the working class is massed in parties which are organizationally independent of the bourgeois parties and at least give lip-service to the program (as well as the ideal) of socialism?

If some of the readers of DISSENT may think the American working class fits Marx's description, Coser at least does not. For he believes that in our society the socialist's "appeal found no echo, his eager offers of help no response, his idealism was derided as impracticality and hypocrisy by the very men whom he wanted to help . . . The matter-of-fact practicality of the labor movement, its insensitiveness to doctrine and idealism, led to his isolation . . . " And although he writes in the past tense, he is speaking of the present as well.

Then why the quotation? There is only one answer. To the careless reader it may *appear* to bolster the real political interest and intention of the writer which is set down in the last two pages of the article. Were it not for this explicit statement, the whole of the rest would appear to be a particularly pointless and arid exercise in sociological trait-description.

Up to this point, for example, Coser has succeeded in discussing the American socialist movement (among others) for seven pages without a single reference to the purpose for which its members believe they have formed their various organizations. After all, is there no relation between the conscious, avowed ideas, purposes and programs of socialist groups and the organizational behaviour of their members?

Of course there is. The Socialist Labor Party's theories and *politics* are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a piece with their rigid, authoritarian organizational attitudes and practices. The Socialist Party's vague, loose reformist socialism, its tendency to adapt *politically* to the views of the liberal wing of American pro-capitalist thinking is reflected in the looseness of the organizational demands made on its members, in the tolerance toward pro-capitalist views among its ranks and leaders.

Is there no relationship between the theory of the Socialist Workers Party that Stalinist Russia is a degenerated workers' state, and that the Stalinist movements are degenerated but genuine working class movements and its own highly bureaucratic internal regime?

Is there no relationship between the firmly Third Campist views of the Independent Socialist League, that is, its rejection of allegiance in any sense to Stalinism or capitalism, and its insistence on the concept that the workers can make progress for their emancipation only through dependence on their own democratically organized strength, and the virtual fetish for democracy which prevails throughout the ISL?

But all this has to do with the relationship between the politics (the self-conscious aspect) and the behaviour and spirit of the groups involved. It might be an interesting topic for concrete investigation. But there is none of that in Coser's piece.

It is quite true that all socialist organizations in America today are sects. That is, they are tiny; they are differentiated among themselves on the basis of specific views or theories or doctrines to which most of their members subscribe with a high degree of consciousness. They tend to have few members who are simply and naively anti-capitalist and pro-socialist.

As long as the conservative and reactionary mood in the country condemns all of the socialist organizations, regardless of the concrete program or characteristic behaviour of any one of them, to the life of educational-propaganda groups, they will have to wrestle with the specific distortions in their political and organizational conceptions and behaviour which are induced by these circumstances.

Today, for instance, psychic and physical energies must be poured out by every socialist who takes himself and his cause seriously, not to make gratifying organizational and political advances, but simply to keep the movement going. If such circumstances are imposed on the socialist (or any other) movement for too long, they are bound to find a reflection in its mentality. Not to recognize this would be naive and inexcusable, particularly in Marxists whose approach should make them specially sensitive to the interplay between the material conditions and the consciousness of the movement.

But if this is true, of what use is a socialist organization today? Should not the intelligent man who wants to be an *effective* socialist shun it, and either join the Democratic Party (of course, for the purpose of warping it to socialist ends), or seek political expression in some ideologically undefined community of dissenters in the hope that out of the political uncertainty and indecision of all of them a ferment will be created in which eventually a new idea will be born?

In the very broadest terms, socialists have a special and unique need to form organizations precisely because both the socialist overthrow of capitalism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the organization of the socialist society require the highest development of organized, associated human activity. That can only be achieved through a combination of developing political consciousness and organizational experience.

But, one may reply, the tiny socialist organizations of today are not engaged in the work of overthrowing capitalism or even in training the broad cadre of the great proletarian political movements of the future. They are too small, harassed and isolated for that. What function, then, can they fulfill which cannot be fulfilled as well if not better by individual socialist intellectuals?

For the Youth

If no socialist organization existed, what would be the political development of every young student or worker who becomes disillusioned with capitalist society?

Most likely, he would be picked up by the Stalinists. If he somehow eluded that fate, but continued to develop his opposition to capitalist society, finding no group of people who agreed with his criticisms (let alone people who have worked out a systematic criticism of their own), he would either sink back into political apathy, or decide after a while that there must be something radically wrong with himself and seek the services of an analyst.

For young socialists it is not enough to be able to read every three months a radical magazine written by their intellectual betters. They have to have their own publications, their own area of activity, if they are to develop themselves. Many of them have not yet reached the stage of serenely contemplating the evils of the world, and, in their impetuous youthful folly, want to strike a blow against them. They are not even satisfied with "asserting values." Hard as it may be to believe, they want to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism and human freedom and dignity, and what may seem even more flabbergasting, they actually think the job can be done.

But do they really know what they are doing? Aren't they presumptuous, callow and ignorant of all the difficulties and obstacles which confront socialists today? Instead of being encouraged to form organizations and "play" at politics (let alone revolutionary politics) shouldn't they rather learn the virtues of humility before the great unsolved theoretical problems?

Young people are perhaps prone to making more mistakes than their elders. But how are they to learn most efficiently and thoroughly? In fact, if there is no organization for them, no social organism within which they can thrash out their ideas and learn by defending them against those of the Stalinist and bourgeois ideologists and *their* youth movements, how can they really learn to be socialists at all? Coser and his colleagues who edit DISSENT may have come, in recent years, to see much that was wrong or inadequate in the socialist youth organizations in which they won their intellectual and political spurs. But if such movements had not existed *in organized form,* would they ever have become socialists in the first place?

For the Development of Socialist Ideas

It is true that the small socialist propaganda group has limited possibilities of subjecting its theories and policies to the only really effective test . . . that of practice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet, as against a group of unorganized individuals who have no more responsibility to each other than to any significant stratum of society, the members of the small socialist organization have an enormous methodological advantage. It lies precisely in the fact that they, as members and representatives of an *organization* take on themselves the responsibility for evolving a series of policies, a "line" if you will, on the major political problems which face the world.

Isolated as it is by the pressure of official public opinion backed up by the official subversive lists and FBI persecution, a live socialist organization, small or large, can sharpen its theoretical equipment precisely by the method of developing a policy for every major political issue on which socialists can have a distinctive political position by virtue of their particular insight into the workings of society. Once socialists cease concerning themselves with policy (even if they are aware that their policy may never get off the printed page) they have definitely left the realm in which socialist theory can be said to have any relation to social action. And by that very act, they will have crossed the thin line which borders the scientific approach in politics, and entered the area in which theoretical free wheeling, in which the grand generalization completely cut loose from concrete reality, have their field day.

Of course, it would be ridiculous to argue that organization itself assures socialists of a scientific approach. Dogmatic sectarianism and opportunism have been the twin scourges of the socialist movement since its beginning. All that we argue on this score is that for ordinary mortals an organization is far more likely to be the locus of serious, responsible theoretical work than a loose band of individuals each of whom refuses to take any responsibility for what is said by any of the others.

But this effort to concretize the product of socialist analysis and theory into a series of policies which socialists urge on the advanced sections of the labor movement is lumped together by Coser with the proclamation of sectarian dogmas as the activity of "men who in their cloistered virtue know the correct prescription." To them he contrasts those who "inquire after the needs, desires, wishes" of their fellowmen.

And the editors of DISSENT? Once they find they have inquired sufficiently into the "needs, desires, wishes" of their fellow men, one of them may actually get down to write an article in which he seeks to fulfill one of the main purposes announced by the magazine when it began: "to help reestablish socialist thought and values." But what in the world can that mean except to gain a more accurate, concrete insight into the workings of capitalism and Stalinism in our time, and from this to derive a more adequate program or series of policies aimed at their destruction?

Of course, that would be, in a way, to concoct a "prescription." But Coser and the other editors of DISSENT have, it appears, sought to guarantee themselves against this possibility by forming a sect one of whose fundamental principles is a hostility to the advocacy (and hence development) of policy. The other principle of this organization is to be against socialist organizations.

In the meantime, Coser's "correct prescriptions" is a contemptuous generalization broad enough to cover every policy advocated by every socialist organization in America. It condemns *all* such policies, the good with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bad, the fruitful with the sterile, the "real" with the sectarian by a condescending phrase, without the author having to come to grips with any single one of them concretely.

Rallying Ground of Today, Seedbed For Tomorrow

The idea contained in the above caption has been frozen and caricatured by the Socialist Labor Party in particular (and in a slightly different form by the Socialist Workers Party) in their sublime belief that the workers will one day turn to them for the sole reason that they have kept their "banners unsullied and uncompromised." That is genuine sectarianism, and Marxists have recognized it as such for a long time.

But does this mean that any group of unorganized intellectuals will be able to come together one day and serve as a rallying-ground for a renewed mass socialist movement just as well as socialists who have maintained their organization and have sought to develop socialist policy and to act on it even in the darkest days of public passivity and reaction?

No socialist organization has any guarantee that it will be *the* pole around which the left wing of the future mass socialist or labor party will crystallize. However, if the labor movement, once turned to a policy of independent militancy, finds that the slender cable composed of living, experienced, and organized socialists which connects them with the experience and knowledge of the past has been severed, its difficulties and the likelihood of its defeat will be magnified tremendously.

But even today, how are groups and individuals (not masses) to be won to the ideas and the struggle for socialism? People may be swayed toward "socialist values" by a magazine. But unless there is an organization they can join, that is the end of it for them. Their socialism can have no real relationship to their lives as social and political people. Instead of a cause which can command their emotional and intellectual allegiance, it can hardly become more than a vague philosophy which demands no effort on their part, which leaves undisturbed the course of their personal and professional lives.

Of course, socialists have no guarantees. All they can do is to seek to make their own organization as scientific, as imbued with implacable hatred for all forms of human oppression and exploitation, as full of determination to struggle against them, and its members as capable of thinking and acting together as training, conscious effort and common experience can make them. If *some* of the socialist organizations in America today have the sectarian characteristics ascribed to them by Coser, others are almost or completely free of them. In any event, the course every serious socialist should follow is to join the best of them and devote his energies to improving it, or at least to seek to form a better one.

But the organizations are feeble; their membership is small; they are sects; if the American labor movement must really depend on this handful as an ideological catalyst, it is in bad shape indeed!

Such gloomy lucubrations are the real basis of Coser's attack on the organized socialist movement. But bemoaning the hard times in which we live is hardly a fruitful or even a dignified activity for socialists. And when such moans get rationalized into an argument, the borderline between the demoralized partisan of socialism and its enemy can easily be crossed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Every generation must do the best it can with conditions as it finds them. Ours are admittedly the worst for the socialist movement since the early days of its formation. All the more honor to those socialists, workers and intellectuals, leaders and rank and filers, who seek to maintain the school for the youth, the workshop of ideas, the rallying point of today and the seedbed for tomorrow . . . the socialist organizations of America.

Lewis Coser replies:

It would be tempting to consider Gordon Haskell's article as simply another exhibit in the literature of sectarianism. It would be tempting but it wouldn't do the article justice. The truth is that Haskell dwells in a kind of limbo suspended between a run-of-the-mill sectarian and a new kind of justification for socialist organization. This new justification might, for want of a better word, be called the Progressive Education approach to socialism.

His article starts with a classic amalgam: Coser discusses sects, sects are being persecuted, there are witch hunters about, ergo . . . But Haskell pulls back at this point, he doesn't *really* mean it. Why the elaborate preparation? His technique might be termed that of the *amalgam interruptus*. Haskell's heart isn't in it, one feels—but in that case why not cut out such stuff altogether?

Half-hearted, that is the word. The whole of Haskell's contribution strikes one in this way; the old fire isn't there any more; the author conscientiously tries the old tricks, but the machinery creaks. There are no longer the usual claims that his organization has the only correct line, that it is going to lead the working class to victory. No, Haskell, really advertises his sect as a kind of night-time nursery for promising young radicals, a school for tender minds of socialist inclination where under the supervision of toughened veterans of the class struggle, they can learn by doing, in the best Deweyan tradition. The whole thing reminds one of High School mock democracy, complete with two party systems, caucuses, elections, parliamentary procedure—but no political reality. Maybe this is all very educational, but is it really serious? Can one acquire political skills, socialist convictions and independent thinking by debating the correct line under the benevolent guidance of some of the old boys? I am afraid that, as Gorge Orwell once said, the political imagination, like certain wild animals, will not breed in captivity.

His whole article makes one feel quite nostalgic, of course. And I suspect that nostalgia is perhaps the single strongest element that keeps organizations such as Haskell's together. But such nostalgia is finally only a shield behind which to protect oneself from the frightening aspects of present day realities. I submit that to face these realities today in a meaningful way it is above all necessary once and for all to stop the mummery, to stop kidding oneself, to shed illusions about maintaining organizations that aren't organizations.

The living idea of socialism cannot be kept in an antiseptic storehouse in anticipation of The Day when it can again be taken out into the open air. Only mummies can be thus preserved. The socialism of the future will need neither the councillors nor the alumnae of radical nurseries, it needs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

independent and autonomous minds. By sheltering their members from the shock of political disenchantment organizations such as Haskell's create a trained incapacity to come to terms with political realities and a trained flight from these realities.

Historical Perspectives—Remote and Not So Remote

"This British-Indian imperial symbiosis was far more than a merely governmental relationship. Unquestionably, it was one of the greatest colonizing achievements of all time and its full import will become evident perhaps only from a remoter historical perspective . . . The policies of the British viceroys were imperial policies on behalf of India, too . . . . "—

HERBERT LUETHY, "What Western Colonialism Gave to Asia," *Commentary, June* 1955

How Lord Clive, founder of British India, won control of Bengal: "But how was the wary and sagacious Hindoo to be deceived? He had demanded that an article founding his claims should be inserted in the treaty . . . and he would not be satisfied unless he saw it with his own eyes. Clive had an expedient ready. Two treaties were drawn up, one on white paper, the other on red, the former real, the latter fictitious. In the former Omichund's name was not mentioned; the latter, which was to be shown to him, contained a stipulation in his favor.

"But another difficulty arose. Admiral Watson had scruples about signing the red treaty . . . But Clive was not a man to do any thing by halves. We almost blush to write it. He forged Admiral Watson's name . . .

"Omichund came . . . the white treaty was produced. Clive then turned to Mr. Scrafton and said: 'It is now time to undeceive Omichund'. 'Omichund,' said Mr. Scrafton, 'the red treaty is a trick, you are to have nothing.' Omichund fell back into the arms of his attendants. He revived, but his mind was irreparably ruined . . . (Clive) saw Omichund a few days later, spoke to him kindly, advised him to make a pilgrimage to one of the great temples of India, in the hope that change of scene might restore his health . . .

"The shower of wealth now fell copiously on the (East India) Company and its servants. A sum of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling, in coined silver, was sent down the river . . . As to Clive, there was no limit to his acquisitions but his own moderation. The treasury of Bengal was thrown open to him . . . Clive walked between heaps of gold and silver, crowned with rubies and diamonds, and was at liberty to help himself. He accepted between two and three hundred thousand pounds . . . "—THOMAS BABBINGTON MACAULEY, *Lord Clive.*

THOMAS BABBINGTON MACAULEY, *Lord Clive.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

With a Bang and a Whimper

THE GREAT CRASH, 1929, by John Kenneth Galbraith. Houghton, Mifflin Co., Boston. 1955. 212 pages. $3.00.

When John Kenneth Galbraith, the noted Harvard economist, testified recently before the friendly Fulbright committee on the condition of the stock market, prices took an uncomfortably familiar tumble. Mr. Galbraith had been quite stern and warned that we were behaving exactly as our fathers did in 1929. If one were to be uncharitable, all this might be credited to the fertile brain of some publicity man anxious to see that Mr. Galbraith's new book received a proper audience. However, such a stunt would have been quite unnecessary, for Wall Street's current spree must itself raise the ghost of Black Thursday: Mr. Galbraith merely underscores in this eminently readable history events that may very well haunt us once more.

The great American capacity for self delusion is unchanged, says Mr. Galbraith, and he is convinced that speculation could still run riot despite all the built-in stabilizers installed in the last 25 years. Present day behavior on the part of several thousand "lambs" gives sufficient reason to suspect that at least in this regard he is right.

The book, exceedingly well written, is not without touches of wry humor. The author is patently an entertaining historian; it is only when he essays the realm of high theory that he goes astray, as in his *American Capitalism: The Theory of Countervailing Power* and in certain parts of this book. At the very start, for example, he questions the usually accepted proposition that things were going wrong long before stock prices began their slide into depression. He feels that such an explanation tends to absolve the financial market from responsibility, since Wall Street could then say that other forces were at fault. While it is true that we cannot acquit the old-time financier for his part in the debacle, it does seem more reasonable to trace the basic causes for the market collapse and the ensuing hard times to more durable factors. That is to say, Mr. Galbraith's view, as set forth here, might be interpreted as a devil theory of the big crash, something he doubtless does not intend.

At the end of the book Mr. Galbraith admits that the entire economy was fundamentally unsound in 1929: income was distributed in a most lopsided fashion, necessitating a high level of investment or luxury consumption or both; a loose corporate structure permitted the setting up of pyramided holding companies, dubious promotions and outright frauds; the banking system suffered from mismanagement and a curious kind of inflexibility bordering on *rigor mortis;* the United States deluded itself that it could sell shiploads of goods to other countries while advising them to peddle their wares elsewhere; and economic science itself was rooted in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an archaic 18th century liberalism that offered shamanistic incantation instead of intelligent policy.

In such a milieu it was little wonder that few people understood what was coming. The speculative madness began as early as 1925, when options to buy options to buy imaginary land in Florida swamps brought illusory riches to several thousand persons. As Mr. Galbraith remarks, this was " . . . the first indication of the mood of the Twenties and the conviction that God intended the American middle class to be rich." Yet, he says, it was not until 1928 that the boom really got out of hand. Early in that year stock prices began to move up and the actions of the big speculators like John Raskob and William Durant were carefully observed by all the little speculators. Panegyrics to perpetual prosperity were sung by such economic oracles as Roger Babson and Irving Fisher. Curiously enough, the only person who was disturbed by what was happening was the new president, Herbert Hoover. But this was kept secret.

Those who could do something about the boom didn't want to. Most commentators say that the Federal Reserve System, as the nation's central banking structure, could have put a checkrein on the runaway market. However, Mr. Galbraith, who explains quite lucidly open market operations and the rediscount rate mechanism, feels that the Federal Reserve was caught in a pathetic dilemma. Had the Federal Reserve sold securities in sufficiently large quantities it might have drained cash away from the money market. But this also might have affected adversely the banks' earning power. The major point, though, which the author does not make clear, is that the Open Market Committee was at this time dominated by the New York Federal Reserve Bank, so that private rather than public interests were paramount. It was not until several years later, when banking reforms were instituted, that Washington took the power to control money away from New York. In the meantime, people made millions, on paper, while the authorities wrung their hands.

Some of the parallels with contemporary events are indeed disturbing. There were the frantic mergers of corporations, not only to eliminate competition but to provide new securities for an insatiable stock market. There were the investment trusts, grotesque prototypes of what are today called mutual funds. There were the home-made financial geniuses with excess cash building new utopias out of furiously rising capital gains. There were all the little people dreaming of golden riches to be garnered by dealing in intangibles. It was remarkable, says Mr. Galbraith, how the market became a central factor in American culture although there were only about a million and a half people afflicted with its frenzy.

The Big Bang came on Thursday, October 24. Mr. Galbraith relates how the nation's top bankers met to stop the downslide as J. P. Morgan, Sr. had stopped the 1907 panic. He tells how Richard Whitney went onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange and ostentatiously placed orders to buy some 20 different stocks. Howard Hopson of Associated Gas fame issued bromidic pronouncements. Charles E. Mitchell of the National City Bank told everyone that all was well. All three were later to face the courts on charges of assorted financial skullduggery. As this went on, the Crash became a Depression and the country was edified with periodic assurances that prosperity was peeking out from some distant corner.

Mr. Galbraith recognizes that all this is a history that can be repeated, but he is certain it would not have the same effect. He avers that the increased share of income going to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

middle and lower income groups and the New Deal reforms, especially the Securities and Exchange legislation and bank insurance, provide a stronger cushion now than was available then. Social security, a better tax system, an increased understanding of the economy—all this, he intimates, will reduce the nerve-shattering shock of another stock market crash. But he does supply the face-saving proviso that a speculative collapse might fracture these new buttresses at unexpected points. When that happens we had all better head for the hills.

BEN B. SELIGMAN

A Great Sociologist

CONFLICT, by Georg Simmel. Free Press. $3.50.

The name of Georg Simmel is barely known in America, and that only among professional sociologists. This is a pity, since Simmel is one of the handful of eminent European sociological theorists whose work remains alive and significant. At a time when most of what passes for sociological theorizing consists either of painstaking investigations into the obvious or elaborate and formalistic system-making, it is particularly valuable to have Simmel's essay on *Conflict* translated into English.

Georg Simmel was born in Berlin in 1858, the son of a prosperous Jewish businessman. His Jewish origin blocked the successful academic career that would otherwise have been open to him; he lectured for almost thirty years at the Berlin University and though his courses attracted international attention he remained a *privatdozent* until a few years before his death, when he was accorded a full professorship at the University of Strasbourg. The marginality of his own fate was perfectly clear to Simmel and his marvelous essay, "The Stranger," like a somewhat similar essay by Thorstein Veblen on "The Intellectual Preeminence of the Jews," may be read on two levels, as social analysis and an effort at self-analysis.

The stranger, says Simmel, "surveys conditions with less prejudice; his criteria for them are more general and more objective ideals; he is not tied down in his actions by habit, piety and precedent." As Veblen would have put it, he is a disturber of the intellectual peace. That is the role Simmel assumes in his essays, and the little volume under review may, one hopes, disturb some of the routinized pieties of present-day American social thought.

While most current sociology seems committed to upholding order against disturbers of the intellectual peace, "common norms and values" against "deviants," the *status quo* against the very idea of conflict, Simmel shows the creative function of social conflict. Far from being a merely "negative" element, conflict becomes, in Simmel's view of things, an element of the social structure that is as organic and necessary as harmony. Without conflict, says Simmel, societies would decay into a sclerotic stasis. While current theorizing sees equilibrium as a natural and normal condition, and conflict only as a temporary departure from this condition, Simmel sees stability as the temporary balance of conflicting forces in interaction. While for most present day theorists conflict is a special case requiring treatment—in both senses of the word—Simmel considers balance a special case. The currently fashionable model is static; Simmel's is profoundly dynamic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An age that has found it possible to pervert Freud's profoundly pessimistic theory, in which the idea of an antimony between the individual and society is basic, into a book of recipes for "adjustment," may yet succeed in devitalizing Simmel's thought. But in the meantime, before he becomes fashionable and tame, this essay might still help teach young intellectuals that the absence of conflict, far from denoting social concord, actually indicates a deep disturbance in society. The sick society stifles dissent, the vigorous society welcomes it.

The present volume contains, in addition to the conflict essay, a translation of a shorter piece, "The Web of Group Affiliations," which, while perhaps less important, certainly merits being available in English. The translations by Kurt Wolff and Reinhard Bendix are competent though they sometimes sacrifice elegance for literalness.

L. C.

Socratic Elenchus

CHARLES A. BEARD: AN APPRAISAL, edited by Howard K. Beale. University of Kentucky Press, 312 pages. $4.50.

Charles A. Beard once summarized for a friend the "laws of history":

> First, whom the gods would destroy they first make mad.
>
> Second, the mills of the gods grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small.
>
> Third, the bee fertilizes the flower that it robs.
>
> Finally, "When it gets dark enough you can see the stars."

This ironically hopeful approach to history might well be extended by Beard himself to this book appraising him as historian, teacher, critic and public figure. The editor, Howard K. Beale, begins with a curious introduction whose very candor would have delighted Beard. We learn that this volume, originally planned in 1939-40 by admirers of Beard, was intended to honor him " . . . while he was still alive and under serious attack for his latest writings." In fact, two volumes of essays were originally intended. They were to be *Festschriften* in homage to the dean and greatest of living twentieth century American historians.

But, as Professor Beale puts it, World War II came. Or, more exactly, the academic ice floes which made up American historiography and which Beard had blasted apart, froze solidly together again; a new Ice Age set in. In his five-page introduction the editor feels compelled to mention no less than four times that most of those originally invited to participate so fell out of sympathy with Beard's views or came to dislike him so intensely that they withdrew from the project. As a consequence, "what began as a testimonial to a man vitally alive and in the thick of controversy has ended as a memorial."

Which is precisely what gives some value to this preliminary study of Beard. Here is the man who, more than any other, brought the study and writing of American history to life, stirred fresh life into the deadliest of the American social studies and, to cap it all, became involved toward the end of his life in the bitterest and most far-reaching controversy of his career over America's role in the world. Here is the founder of a whole school of historiography, the author of, at one time, the most widely accepted and influential history of America. Yet,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

today, the decline in his influence is apparent to all and, in so far as our historians now grapple with the ideas of history, most work against the Beardian concepts and attempt to roll back the stream of social and economic liberal interpretation of which he was the master. In this sense, the contributors to this volume merit the respect due those who defend original thinkers against their detractors.

Prevalent anti-Beardism, to be sure, consists of more than simply taking a position against that special brand of isolationism (Beard referred to it as "continentalism") which the historian advocated in the last years of his life. This, after all, had nothing in common with the Hoover brand of reactionary isolationism but was Beard's last desperate effort to save something of his epic "American dream" that the New World, by creating a superior civilization, might by example save the Old World. The academicians who now lead American historical writing have rejected far more than this or that specific interpretation of Beard, their concentrated efforts to break down details of his work through the minutae of research notwithstanding. They have rejected his sense of history, his scope and his style, his epic mood and manner of painting history in broad strokes; they have rejected his vision. All this in favor of the "real," the description of the traditional bare bones of history. Read any issue of the *American Historical Review* and the extent of the retreat is shocking. Little has changed since the days Beard wrote that he found in the universities "too much routine, not enough peace; too much calm, not enough passion; . . . too many theories, not enough theory; too many books, not enough strife of experience; too many students, not enough seekers."

Or, bearing in mind the current divorce between knowledge and action, reflect on the hostility which our thinkers and intellectuals today must feel toward these words of Beard, contributed to his students:

> The Socratic elenchus is the prime instrument for training intelligence; and the only tolerable goal of our labors must be an artistically perfect adjustment of our conduct and ideas to the noblest imagined potentialities of the constantly becoming situations, thus uniting the word and the deed which were not asunder in the beginning and will not be at the end."

Great teacher that he was, Beard constantly urged his students to work in the substance of the future, not simply the ashes of yesterday.

AS HISTORIAN, BEARD WAS A REVOLUTIONARY who broke the old molds and forced the remaking of all prevailing syntheses of American history. Further, and this was his equally important contribution to our life, he brought to the surface the question of *power* (social, economic, political and class power) in American life, forced its recognition and examination. In the light of this, the question of the extent to which Beard was influenced by Marxism—discussed in several essays of this volume—seems curiously academic although incidentally throwing light on his complete open-mindedness.

We can here cite only a few of the essays, though all of them have their interest. In an examination of the intellectual roots of Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution,* Richard Hofstadter suggests its links with the Populist movement as well as the change in American intellectual milieu which led to reevaluations of this work; Howard K. Beale fruitfully traces the career of Beard, the historian; and perhaps most sympathetic of all, Walton Hamilton presents a brilliant *tour de force,* done with the full vigor of Beard's style and consisting of fragmentary comments on American life and government today. S. P.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE ORIGIN OF THE COMMUNIST AUTOCRACY—Political Opposition in the Soviet State, First Phase: 1917-1922—by *Leonard Schapiro*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 397 pp. $7.00. (A Publication of the London School of Economics and Political Science.) Covering the period in which Lenin was an active participant in the creation of the Soviet state, Mr. Schapiro argues that the totalitarianism of the Russian state is essentially the creation of the Leninist regime, deriving from theoretical foundations and the exigency of maintaining in power an unpopular minority. Mr. Schapiro makes frank statement of his biases and opinions. Agree with these or not, his book is massively documented, containing between its covers the first thorough history of political opposition in the early years of the Soviet Union. A fuller review will appear in a forthcoming issue of DISSENT.

Sample Copy on Request

CROSS CURRENTS—
a quarterly review

"the whole problem today is to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom" — Emmanuel MOUNIER

KIERKEGAARD on doubt
BERNANOS on Luther
MENDE on under-developed countries
MOUNIER on Communism
STRATMANN on pacifism
BARTH between East & West
WEIL on personalism
GUARDINI on the Grand Inquisitor
SCHELER on the tragic
CONGAR on reform in the Church
HEER on the priest-workers
DAWSON on sociology

$1 a copy $3 a year
reprints 25c each

CROSS CURRENTS
3111 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y.

MOVING? Please advise us of any change of address. Use Post Office Form 22. Second-class mail is *not* forwarded by the Post Office.

Miscellany

Sidney Hook Chats With Karl Marx

VISITS TO OTHER WORLDS have often been thought of as difficult, even traumatic experiences. Through the fantasy of spatial travel, the visitor would try to confront elements within his thought or feeling he had previously hesitated to acknowledge. But, apparently, the stress need not always be a critical one, for Sidney Hook recently paid a visit to the other world which left him completely cheerful and reassured. So much so that he promptly wrote it up for *The New Leader* of May 2, 1955.

Most of his visit seems to have been spent in conversation with Karl Marx. Hook asked him a series of questions concerning the relationship between Marxism and Stalinism, which Marx—very patiently, we thought—proceeded to answer. (Marx made it clear that he didn't approve of Stalinism.) The answers were somewhat on the rudimentary side, but then the questions weren't so sharp either. In any case, it appears that since his death Marx has become a quite reasonable fellow who, on all the important questions of our day, agrees entirely with Sidney Hook. "Capitalism and socialism as they were traditionally conceived," Hook happily reports Marx as telling him, "are today irrelevant abstractions in understanding social reality."

One must envy Sidney Hook. Most of us, even the ferocious *Dissenters*, can feel little certainty these days, and even the handful who still think of ourselves as in some sense Marxists must nonetheless wonder exactly what relationship our modulations, changes and shifts of opinion have to Marx's system of ideas. But now Sidney Hook, who surely cannot look back to his *Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx* without some uneasiness, proceeds—malicious tongues would say with an absurd complacence, but we know it to be a modest assurance—to inform the world that Marx has learned to accept in toto his (Hook's, that is) views. And what is still more of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

miracle, Marx, who once had a rather vitriolic pen, seems now to have taken over Hook's style as well—so that he writes almost as if he *were* Sidney Hook.

Rumors have reached us that if Marx continues on good behavior and learns his lesson about the nature of "social reality," Hook may go so far as to propose him for membership in the American Committee for Cultural Freedom.

I. H.

The Price of Non-conformity

William O. Reichart

They plainly did not know how to treat me . . . for they thought that my chief desire was to stand on the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hinderance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body.

THOREAU, *Civil Disobedience.*

IT IS A WELL-ESTABLISHED axiom that a state must jealously guard itself against the large-scale disaffection of its citizens. Those whose personal convictions have prevented them from adequately fulfilling their obligations to the state have often been punished as an example to others. In obvious demonstration of this fact, the United States recently sentenced Minnesota's four Doty brothers to serve their second term in prison for their refusal to conform to the provisions of the Selective Service law.

The history of the Doty brothers' plight starts in 1951 when they refused to register for the draft on the grounds that to do so would be a violation of their religious convictions. Joel, the oldest brother, was sentenced to two years in prison, while Orin, Paul, and Sid were sentenced to eighteen months each. Thus, like their father before them who had served a prison sentence during World War I for the same thing, the Doty brothers were made to pay the price of non-conformity.

But their difficulties did not end with their release from prison. Registered against their will by the prison authorities, the draft board at Pine Island, Minnesota, appeared to be anxiously waiting their release from prison so that it might order them to report for induction. Their refusal to report, of course, immediately led to the issuance of criminal charges, and they were subsequently sentenced to two years in prison which they are now serving in Texarkana, Texas.

If the events that have already happened are any indication of things to come, Joel has little hope that he will be allowed to spend much of his future with his wife and two children, aged eight and twenty-two months. For in Joel's case, according to Minneapolis attorney Chester W. Bruvold, the government acted "deliberately out of pique." Joel, when released from prison, was one month short of his twenty-sixth birthday and thus would not have been subject to the draft thirty days later. But despite the fact that he was unemployed at the time, according to the *Minneapolis Tribune,* Joel was classified 2-A (employed in an essential civilian occupation) and thereby became subject to the draft until he passes his thirty-fifth birthday. His classification was changed from 2-A to 1-A about thirty days later so that he might be eligible for induction along with his brothers.

So far as the bare legal aspects of the case are concerned, there is little doubt that the government has remained within the strict letter of the law. There is, in fact, a subtle, though not very real, difference between a refusal to register for the draft and a refusal to report for induction; and however fine this distinction may be, it does not appear that the Dotys have been technically subjected to double-jeopardy. There is some question, of course, as to the propriety of the act whereby the Dotys were registered, against their will, by the prison authorities while serving their first prison sentence, as well as the way in which Joel has been treated. But here, too, there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does not seem to be any clear-cut infraction of the law, however unjust its consequences. In applying the law, however, the government obviously has been vindictive, laying itself open to the charge that it is more interested in blind conformity than in justice.

THE POINT OF CONTENTION in this case, then, is not legal but moral. The right of the individual to object to military service on grounds of conscience stems from society's recognition of the fact that some religious groups are opposed on principle to participation in war, and that members of these groups should not be forced to act against their religious convictions. But the government's conception of religion is exceedingly restrictive. As the law now stands, the individual is only permitted to object to military service if he is a member of a recognized formal religion. But as Patrick Murphy Malan, the executive secretary of the American Civil Liberties Union, says, "The sincerity of conscientious objectors should not be judged by the test of a religious formula so narrow as to exclude ethical or humanistic beliefs."

The Dotys, judged by their expressed opinions, are most properly classified as practicing humanists. In conversation, one is immediately impressed by the obvious sincerity of their moral convictions. Their manner is mild and polite and there does not appear to be a trace of exhibitionism or hostility in their personalities.

One of the basic principles underlying their position seems to be that Christianity tends to border on hypocrisy if it is not rigidly applied in practice. This accounts for their refusal to claim religious grounds as the basis of their objection to military service. Most institutionalized Christian groups, according to Joel, have directly or indirectly supported war at one time or another in violation of the commandment not to kill, and have otherwise shown themselves to be more concerned with the dogmas of Christianity than the faithful practice of its ethic. It is for this reason that they decline to take up membership in any particular church.

But more important to the Dotys' position is the concept that men, whatever their race or religion, are somehow related to one another in spirit if not in fact. It follows, for them, that formal church organization is superfluous. Joel displays an intense interest in the Quaker and Mennonite faiths. But his interest is academic rather than practical, for he already feels himself to be in communion with the adherents of every faith as well as those who profess no faith. The "church," for the Dotys, is nothing less than the entire body of humanity.

Given their philosophical position, it follows that the Dotys are unable to bring themselves to cooperate in any way with the military authorities. For there is the insurmountable moral problem that to train for war is to learn the art of killing one's fellow man. The very act of putting on a military uniform, or even registering for military service, is tacit admission that the peace has been lost and that bloodshed is to follow. The Dotys maintain that the business of the soldier is the waging of war and not the preservation of peace. Unable to accept the argument that peace can be maintained through military strength, the Dotys have no other alternative than the one they have chosen.

AS FIRMLY AS THEY HOLD their convictions, the Dotys do not seem to be lacking in basic humility. They understand that their extreme stand in regard to military service places them outside of society's pale, and that the *a priori* nature of their position is antithetical to the "realism" practiced by the state. As regrettable as this may be, they are nevertheless compelled to answer to their personal consciences before any other consideration. The logic of this position is clear: to become a good citizen it is first necessary to become a good man, whereas the practice of citizenship without the prior development of one's personal moral character tends to be little more than a blind adherence to the bare letter of the law.

Whatever stand one may personally take in regard to war and military service, the member of a democratic society must recognize the dire consequences that flow from the suppression of a minority point of view such as that represented by the Dotys. The spirit of toler-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ation which is the hallmark of democracy is the common property of all of the community's members. Deny it to one and the pattern is established whereby it may be denied to others, with the result that the good faith necessary for the maintenance of democracy has been destroyed.

Like Thoreau, the Dotys have placed society in a position in which it must re-evaluate its policy, forcing it to consider the degree to which it can insist upon conformity in its citizens against the dictates of their consciences. In this sense it is no exaggeration to say that in insisting upon the right to their own freedom of conscience, the Dotys have performed a service for us all.

On McCarthy And the Spectre

William Spinrad

READERS OF DISSENT are probably as tired as everyone else of analyses of McCarthy. This note is offered for only one reason—to say a word on the continuing fears of a "McCarthy movement." A close look at contemporary America discloses no potential for any such mass movement (unless, of course, there is a serious depression or an international catastrophe, in which case "all bets are off").

A large proportion of the population (whatever the actual figure) is, unfortunately, for McCarthy—both his "aims" and "methods." Frustrated by the cold-war impasse, they applaud a public figure who is pledged to ferret-out "domestic reds." But, *they are not ready to do anything themselves.* The McCarthyite audience is even more politically inert than the liberal public.

Witness the response to the Senate hearings on McCarthy's censure. Millions, it is true, signed petitions opposing the censure. Yet, how were the signatures collected? As one example, the most publicized distribution in New York City was through *students in a parochial elementary school.* Children, not politically-involved adults, were expected to assume the active role. Furthermore, when called upon for some minimum, active expression of support, few verbal McCarthyites showed up. Attempted McCarthy protest rallies were all, as Westbrook Pegler lamented, miserable "turkeys." If there was ever a time for a *movement* to show itself, this was the crucial moment. Yet this effort at an *ad hoc,* bush-league movement completely fizzled.

We live in a period which breeds a McCarthy, but which also limits his effectiveness. Those who might provide the base for a McCarthy-movement—the middle-class adherents of the so-called "right wing"—are not oriented towards political protest. They are too busy making money, seeking new ways to make money, buying new homes in the suburbs, planning their sons' careers. Above all else, they want *respectability.* This aspect of the drive towards conformity diminishes the appeal of any demagogue. Even those who approve the antics of McCarthy, Jenner, *et. al.* have no fantasies about emulating them; rabble-rousing is not the path to success in contemporary suburbia. And, in the recent mild showdown, much of the McCarthy audience lined up with Eisenhower and the Senate, the symbols of respectable power.

(Although we have emphasized McCarthy's support by "right-wing middle-class elements, there is no evidence that his adherents are disproportionately found in such groups. Whatever the social complexion of his organized coterie, those who accept his policies may, just as likely, be found among working-class, pro New and Fair Deal Democratic voters. This, in any case, is the writer's untested impression.)

There is no place for any McCarthy-led or inspired political body outside the Republican Party, such as some liberals and socialists seem to fear. McCarthy and his cohorts know this, and they are less likely to break from the GOP than the leaders of the ADA from the Democrats. What we call McCarthyism remains a serious danger. It is not a danger, however, of any incipient mass movement, but of the continued capricious extension of canons of military security to the political arena; McCarthy remains the wildest exponent of this technique, but not necessarily the most threatening one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

"Dissent" in England

Editors:

May I as a British Socialist pay tribute to the really fine magazine that you publish in DISSENT? I have now read the first four editions, covering the first year of publication, almost from cover to cover. It provides for the critical socialist what is found hardly anywhere else today—certainly there is no British publication at the present time which provides such important material for the thinking socialist. The existence of a Labor Party of course leads to a certain theoretical inertia, which the present tragic weakness of the American left naturally does not permit. Suffices it to say that it provides the best (if not the only worthwhile) socialist forum remaining.

I am naturally anxious to see its widest possible circulation in Britain, and I would be glad to do anything I can to assist its circulation here. My own copy is seen by about half a dozen people, but I would naturally like to see more people subscribe to it.

ALLAN SPINK

Blind Spot

Editors:

My subscription runs out after the Summer issue. Enclosed is $5. Please put me down for another year.

I've read a fair number of American left-wing journals and yours is by far superior; in fact, I get the impression I'm in quite good intellectual company. I was especially interested in Silone's *Choice Of Comrades,* Rosenberg's *Trilling And Dreiser* (an excellent job), Cole's *Socialism vs. Welfare State,* Neumann's *Anxiety In Politics.* And *The Journal Of The Quarter* always gets things under way nicely.

With those bouquetish remarks tossed, allow me to say I think you've a blind spot. The darkness I refer to is that which you exhibit in your attitude toward the Soviet regime. Your attitude is the revolution betrayed, the whore has no virtue. So far, OK, no argument. But why the attacks on Deutscher? Here, in quality as well as quantity, you, in your attempted refutations, tipped your heavy (anvilish?) hand. You didn't really answer him; instead, you responded emotionally to the Stalinist regime. Wouldn't it have been better if you had confined yourselves to a critique of Deutscher's arguments? He, in his reply, gave you about what you deserved.

Believe me when I say that I experienced no sense of satisfaction. It is not at all pleasant to watch two parties, both of whom you respect, engage in a rhubarb such as that one was—one that could have been avoided.

The Deutscher rumpus was the most flagrant example of the harm this blind spot does you. I honestly believe you do yourselves an injustice in allowing it to govern your response to discussions re the Stalinists. How about it?

Joe Emsley, *Phila.*

Congratulations

Editors:

Thank you for your circular letter of April 4 and a sample copy of DISSENT. I have placed to-day a subscription to your magazine through your local agent, Whyte Book Shop & Gallery. May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your bold venture and wish DISSENT a long life in the service of socialist cause. I should be most grateful if you could send a sample copy to a friend of mine in India . . .

P. C. R., *Wash., D.C.*

Editors:

Enclosed find my second contribution of $5.00. I hope other and larger contributions will come from me in the future.

You have just come out with another fine issue of DISSENT. Congratulations! You have struck just the right balance between scholarship and journalism.

I felt that Mr. Howe's article on the ADA was very perceptive. Especially the application of Rabbi Zusza's philosophy.

H. R., *Philadelphia*

CLASSIFIED ADS

DISSENT will accept classified ads within the limits of its space. Rates, payable in advance: 50c a line.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your

cultural lag

is showing

if

you

aren't

a

subscriber

to the new

NEW REPUBLIC

52 issues cost $7

it has changed,
for the better,
but the only
ones who know
it are those
who read it.

NEW REPUBLIC

1826 Jefferson Pl., N.W.
Washington 6, D.C.

Read

THE SOCIALIST CALL

●

Get

the current issue

IN DEFENSE OF
'OLD-FASHIONED' SOCIALISM
Frank Marquart
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE
SOCIAL GOSPEL?
Dr. Walter G. Muelder
REFLECTIONS ON THE
FAILURE OF MAX EASTMAN
Norman Thomas
DECLINE AND FALL OF
COLONIALISM
Fenner Brockway
RACIAL INTEGRATION:
AN EVALUATION
Layle Lane

THE SOCIALIST CALL
303 Fourth Ave.
New York 10, N. Y.

I want to receive the Socialist Call every month. I enclose $3.00 for a year's subscription.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone .....

State .....

BOOKS

SOCIALISM RUSSIA
ECONOMICS AFRICA

If you want any book in these fields write to us.

UNIVERSITY PLACE BOOK SHOP
69 University Place N. Y. 3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED